

98-08-07a Colossians

Let's begin our study of the Word of God this evening with a word of prayer. Father, we thank you for the many ways that you have expressed your grace toward us. We thank you especially for the gift of your Spirit who enlightens us and gives us discernment, understanding and remembrance, the ability to apply the truth of your Word.

We pray tonight as we study the letter to the Colossians that God the Holy Spirit will be with us, that these things will become a part of the resources in our souls to enable us, with your divine power, to fulfill the purpose for which you created us and have saved us and have left us in this life on this earth to reflect the glory of our Savior Jesus Christ. We pray these things in his name. Amen.

We resume tonight in Colossians chapter 1. The portion of this letter that we have covered thus far includes the greeting, introduction, a review of the thankfulness that Paul feels as he thinks about the believers who attend, and an inscription of the kind of people he sees on their behalf. We spend a lot of time in prayer. We exchange prayer requests from time to time, especially in larger Christian groups and organizations.

If you find yourself in those circumstances, many times requests are solicited. And we have a variety of things that we bring to each other's attention to be supported in prayer by our fellow believers. But if you could imagine, we tend to want prayer more when we're under pressure or when we have a situation facing us that requires a decision.

If you could ask anybody in the world to pray for you, you look around and figure, well, who really has insight into the plan and purpose of God? Who is going to be able to pray effectively on my behalf? Who is it that could really bring this issue before the throne of grace in a way that's beneficial to me? Wouldn't it be great if you could just go to the Apostle Paul and say, Paul, could you please pray for me? Well, basically, Paul has prayed for us. And we tend to think, well, I want you to pray that my circumstance will be fixed or that my illness will be healed or my catastrophe will be averted and my circumstances will be changed to turn out beneficially. But Paul, knowing God and knowing God's plan and knowing our purpose on earth, prays this prayer.

This is the prayer that he prays for believers. And in it, we see the clear outline of what our purpose is, why we're here. What is the meaning of life? This is one of those precipices in the mind that if you stop and dwell on it, maybe it's not this way for you, but for me, there are some things, if I stop and think about them and start dwelling on them for too long, I feel like one of those cars in the movies that's up on a high hairpin curve with a steep grade and you're going too fast and you're trying to make the turn and you're just in danger.

You're already on two wheels and you're in danger of not being able to turn and just slipping down the slope and being destroyed. And there are some things that are so incomprehensible in

the sense of their magnitude. And when you stop and think about the number of people that are on the earth, the complexity of God's plan and God's universe, start trying to imagine the number of atoms and molecules that God has created.

And he knows where every single one of them are. He is holding each one of them together. It's immense.

It's like an ant trying to comprehend modern American society. We just don't have the ability to conceive of how God can be God, how God can do what he's doing. It's so far beyond our... And if we try, you can imagine a little ant trying to figure out an eight-cylinder combustion engine.

All he knows is something great big squashed him. That's about as much as he knows. He can sense little chemical trails and things.

But our level of knowledge is way beyond what any creature could comprehend. And it is on that order of magnitude, the things that God is doing in his purpose, with his creation. His capabilities are so immense that they defy comprehension.

And that's where you get your passages that talk about God in his surpassing greatness and his unknowability. He's unknowable in that sense. We can't, with a finite mind, encompass infinity by definition.

The finite cannot wrap itself around the infinite. It's just not possible to conceive of something when we're this limited. However, God, because he is all-powerful and because he is all-knowing, has figured out a way to make himself comprehensible to finite man.

And it takes omnipotence and it takes omniscience to essentially figure out how to present himself and reveal himself in a way that is comprehensible to us. He could have just left himself up there in his immensity and we would look at the blinding greatness of his glory and be turned to dust and ashes and it would be over. But God cares about us.

God loves us. And God wants us to know him. So in the pages of his word, which in turn reveals the person of Jesus Christ, God has revealed himself.

And he has figured out a way to reveal a substantial part of himself, a great deal of his infinity, a great deal of his infinite power, his infinite love, his infinite grace, his infinite characteristics are revealed through the word, both the written word and the living word, Jesus Christ himself. That's what Paul has gotten to here in Colossians because looking at that issue redistributes our priorities. It changes everything that we think when we look at our lives.

We get caught up in the day-to-day things. How's my car running? How's my air conditioner working? How's my business going? What's my balance look like in Quicken when I'm trying to see if I'm going to survive the next set of bills to be paid? Am I sticking with my budget? What are people thinking? Did I offend someone? Did I fail in some area? The relationships with people.

Have I kept up with my correspondence? Do I owe someone something? We get caught up in the issues of considering ourselves to be acceptable and where we should be in our circumstances.

It's very important for us as believers, without letting those things go, because they're all important and they're all a part of life, but to keep those in the larger context of our relationship with God, our standing before God. Because if we have ourselves too much in this world, the things of this world can pry us loose from our eternal identity, our divine identity. And Satan or those in league with Satan or those sympathetic with his world view, whether they think they're in league with Satan or not, will take the things of this world and deflect us from our purpose.

There is nothing that is less pleasing in God's sight than for us to be distracted and deflected and moved away from the hope that is given to us in the gospel. We think, well, my hope is I'm going to heaven and not hell when I die. But our hope is to fulfill God's purpose.

And salvation, in the eternal sense, is just the first step. That just gets you into the game. That's not the goal, it's the means to an end.

And it's just one step. So we don't want to lose sight of that. We don't want to be so caught up.

It would be like sitting down in front of the TV some evening and getting engrossed in a movie. And maybe it's one of these mini-series. Maybe it's the Thorn Birds.

Maybe they've got Richard Chamberlain there and you just get wrapped up in the gruesome circumstances. I never saw that, but I know enough about the plot line that I'm glad I didn't see it. But you sit down and you get immersed in this mini-series and these actors and what they portray.

And maybe your washing machine is flooding. And maybe your backyard is on fire. And maybe you've got a child strangling in the bathtub upstairs.

But you're so caught up in this movie that you can't tear yourself away. Well, which is more important? Your child's life, your house, your belongings, or how this little movie turns out? Well, you can make the same sort of comparison. What's more important? The little movie of our lives or the reality and the importance of God's plan, God's purpose, God's existence in the world? The thing that was happening in the Lycus Valley is that people were coming in and using these little human viewpoint, worldly levers, to pry believers away from their hope, to pry them away from the consciousness of their identity and their relationship with God.

People were dressing it up and disguising it with language that seemed to come from the Bible. They were saying, well, this is what's really righteousness. This is true epinosis.

And this is the way to really please God, is to do this and to do that and do the other. Here's a mystical way that you can come to know God. Here's a way through works that you can please

God.

And all of these competing philosophies that did not have the truth of the Word of God at their center, were being presented and were being offered as alternatives. How susceptible are we as believers to these ideas and these philosophies and these religious approaches to life? How susceptible are we? How likely are we today or tomorrow or as we live our lives at present to fall into one of these little grooves that leads us away? How likely is it? It's exactly as possible, it's just as much possible as we are immersed in the world. It's like an equation.

If you're immersed in the world 70% of the time, then you've got a 70% chance of being distracted. If you concentrate on the things of the world and if you think of them purely in human terms, purely in human viewpoint, 80% of the time, then there's an 80% chance that you're going to miss the plan and the purpose of God. It is directly proportional.

To the extent that we can pull ourselves up short and stop and remember who we are and why we're here, to that extent, the possibility exists that we can fulfill God's plan and God's purpose. It's a direct proportion. So, we can measure ourselves.

Stop and think. Think about the preceding day. This was a Friday.

It's usually a real busy day. Just evaluate the time from the time we woke up this morning until we arrived here tonight. Believe me, it isn't any more comfortable for me than it is for you.

But stop and think about all the effort, the things that we did. How conscious were we that we are believers in union with Jesus Christ and that everything we do, we're doing heartily as unto the Lord, not unto men? How often did we stop and analyze, are my motives pure? Am I doing this for the right reasons? Am I doing this because it's pleasing in God's sight regardless of what people are going to think? When I engaged in conversation, somebody happened by, or I talked to someone on the phone, or I got engaged in some other interaction with other people, what was going through my mind? Was I worried about what they thought? Or was I thinking in terms of divine purposes, divine opportunities? Not just for witnessing or for trying to quote a scripture, but for being a person that reflects the nature and character of Jesus Christ. Living our lives because we are Christians.

Doing what we do because we represent Jesus Christ in His absence on this earth. That's the measure. That's what Paul brings to the Colossians.

When Epaphras comes and he says, look Paul, these things are attacking us from every side. There are all of these subtle, deceptive presentations of philosophy and religion and people are scratching their heads and saying maybe, how do we know that we're right and these people are wrong? Maybe they're right and I'm wrong. There seem to be so many alternatives.

How can we identify the real deal and be sure that we're in it? Well, that's the question that Paul

is answering here in chapter 1. That's why he says in verse 9, for this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you. Here is Paul's prayer. Whatever you're facing, whatever we have by way of circumstances, challenges, ups and downs, whatever your situation is immediately, this is the prayer that Paul prays.

To ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will. Not the knowledge of how to beat the stock market as it plummets. Not the knowledge of how to hedge the old retirement fund there as the financial world seems to be in a tremble.

Not to second guess how the President's woes are going to turn out and who's going to be the Democratic candidate and who's going to be the Republican candidate and what's going to happen to our city taxes here and so forth. Is my lawn going to live in the drought? To ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will. Wouldn't it be great in every circumstance to know exactly what God's will is? We tend to think in terms of circumstances.

Well, God's will is that I live at this address and that I be married to this person and that I have this job and that I wear these socks. We want to know God's will for every single thing. God's will has to do with God's plan.

God doesn't care what socks you're wearing. He's much more concerned with what thoughts we're thinking, what priorities we're setting, what goals we're aiming for. Why are you wearing the socks you're wearing? Were you trying to impress someone? Are they Armani socks and you want to show everybody that you're stylish and trendy? Why do we do what we do? We tend to want to find a concrete answer for God's will.

Many of you will remember our study of divine guidance. We have to back away from thinking, well, it's God's will for me to be in circumstance A or circumstance B or situation C or with person D. It is much more, why do we do what we do? Can we expect divine support and divine grace based on the priorities that we're setting, the goals that we are striving for? That's why Paul prays and asks that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. We saw those two words.

There's a practical knowledge that can solve the immediate problem and there's a wisdom that knows how that fits into the bigger picture. It's winning the battle and winning the war. It's knowing how to conduct oneself in the immediate crisis and also being able to see the big picture and seeing how that fits.

Sometimes you have to lose a battle to win the war. Anybody that plays chess knows the concept of the gambit. And there is a time when you sacrifice a piece to gain positional advantage.

There are times when we will give up the good opinion of other people. We will let that go. They're going to think I'm nuts.

They're going to think I don't care. They're going to impute wrong motives. They're going to impute wrong to me.

They're going to misjudge me. They're going to say bad things, think bad things about me if I do this thing. But I will sacrifice that for the greater good of knowing that I am acting in a way that is in accordance with the divine will.

This is what God would have me do. I cannot compromise my principles before God to try to make this person happy or to try to avoid hurting their feelings or to keep their good opinion. Those are the kinds of decisions that this wisdom and spiritual understanding give us the ability to make in a way that pleases God.

You know what the short-term effects are. You can analyze it and tell what to do. You can also see it in the big picture.

So that there is a purpose for this. So that you may live a long and happy life. So that you may prosper.

So that you may have five categories of blessing in every area of your life. So that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him. That's the goal.

And we tend to forget that even when we go to God for guidance. We say, Oh God, give me wisdom. Oh God, help me find the answer to this problem.

Why do we want that answer? Because we don't want to be unhappy. We don't want things to turn out in a disastrous fashion. We don't want to find ourselves unhappy and miserable.

So we say, Oh God, give me the right answer so that I will be happy. So that I will be pleased. So that my life will go according to the path that I think it ought to take.

What is the goal? Is it a life that's worthy of the Lord? Is it a life that's fully pleasing? If that's your goal, and if you find that you're achieving it to some extent, there is a happiness and a fulfillment that transcends anything that a circumstance could give you. It doesn't matter what house you're living in or what car you drive or what job you have or what people are around you. If you are walking the worthy walk, if you can look and know that God is pleased with the way you're living, it doesn't get any better than that.

That happiness is transcendent and it cannot be explained. It can't be transferred. It can only be known by those who have gone down that particular path.

You may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work. When you do good works, they are fruitful. They count.

They matter in the eternal purpose of God. They count when God looks at His objectives. What

did God say back there in Job 1 when He was talking to Satan? Have you considered My servant Job? Job was living a life that pleased God.

He was walking the worthy walk. Now, that did great things for Job for a period of time, but his worthy walk also caused him to have tremendous woe. Because he was walking the worthy walk, he came up for special attention and special testing.

It wasn't because he was slacking. It's because he was faithful. It's because he stood out in his generation the way Noah did, the way Abraham did, the way Moses did, the way David did, that he came up for special attention.

And so you can't say, well, walk the worthy walk and you're going to be happy, prosperous, no bad things will ever happen to you. What you can say is that God is pleased. When God looked at Job, He was proud of him.

It's kind of like He goes to Satan and says, look at My servant Job. Look at the life that he's living. Wouldn't it be great to be in that category? God could look down and fill your name in the blank.

Look at My servant blank. Wow! To think that God could say that about us. That's the goal.

And it's not that hard to achieve because it's not done in our strength. It's done in divine strength. The reason we're reviewing these concepts is this is the key to understanding the next paragraph in Colossians chapter 1. This view is what Paul is trying to inculcate in Colossae.

And he prepares them by talking about this prayer that he prays. Because the purpose is to walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. Because it's a non-vicious circle, if you will.

It builds on itself. That's why the Word of God is line upon line, precept upon precept. We gain a certain amount of wisdom and knowledge.

And that's a foundation where we can gain additional wisdom and knowledge. And that's a foundation. And we build floors.

And it's been compared to building a building in your soul with levels or with floors. And that is a sound, biblical viewpoint of what happens in our soul. It really does work that way.

And as we gain knowledge, we can go back and revisit passages or studies that we've done in the past. And suddenly we have fresh insight because God has been able to build a foundation. And now we have more of a frame of reference.

Strengthened with all might. This is strengthened with the strength of God. How much strength do you need? Does God have enough strength for what you need? Well, if you're strengthened with all might according to the standard of His glorious power, that's enough.

Do we need to do like Israel and want to run down to Egypt? Do we need to make flesh our strength? Cursed is the man who trusts in man. We so often want to go look for help. This is a really prevalent condition in the church today where when we feel that there is a problem, that we had a series of scandals of pastors and prominent evangelists engaging in sexual misconduct and immorality.

So the church at large and seminaries and so forth thought we've got to do something about this. We need strength to overcome this great temptation. It's in our society.

It's all of this stuff in the movies and advertising pornography and now the internet and everything else. We need something to combat this. So what was the traditional church's answer? Let's all band together.

Let's get into small groups. Let's start little men's groups that we'll meet and mentor each other and disciple each other and encourage each other and check up on each other. Let's have accountability.

And one of the big Christian buzz words for the last decade now has been accountability. Make yourself accountable. Find another Christian man or woman that you can make yourself accountable to and let them pry into your privacy and ask you all the hard questions and so forth.

What is that? It's an admission that we do not have the inner strength necessary to combat a problem. So we're turning somewhere for strength. And where are we turning? We're turning to another human being who is equally lacking in strength and we're going to pool our lack of strength and attack this problem.

Well, how well is that going to work? Cursed is the man who puts his trust in man. It doesn't say cursed is the man who puts his trust in an evil man. It doesn't matter what kind of man.

Cursed is the man who puts his trust in man, who relies on man for his strength, who relies on flesh for his strength. And it can be the most godly group of people in the world and if you go to them and that's your strength, what happened to your relationship with Christ? You might as well become a Catholic and get a couple of layers of priests and bishops between you and God and put your trust in them. It's no different.

It's a flat level organization instead of a hierarchical organization, but you're doing the same thing. Is Christ insufficient? Is the Word of God and the Spirit of God insufficient to meet the need? Paul says that we are strengthened with all might according to His glorious power for all patience and all longsuffering with joy. Not only can we have all the patience we need and all the longsuffering we need, but we can have joy in our soul while we're doing it.

And that is definitely a supernatural condition. It's the power of God. We don't need to learn how to bear our souls and be vulnerable to one another.

We need to learn how to fill our souls and have fellowship with our God. That's where the strength is. And that's what we don't know how to do as a church at large today.

This is the kind of thing that was plaguing these churches and that's exactly why Paul is writing this letter. It's such a great letter for us to study in these times because the truth here directly addresses the maladies of our church today. I don't mean our church, I mean the church.

Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. Being qualified does not mean you've got it. It means you're qualified.

You can qualify and not collect. You can qualify and not succeed. You can qualify and not take that thing that you qualified for home with you.

Qualification isn't all there is. God has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. In the same way, we are qualified for the power of God.

We are qualified to have all strength and all might according to the standard of His glorious power. We're qualified for that. Every believer in Jesus Christ is qualified to get the power for all the patience and all the longsuffering and all the joy and all the thanksgiving that we are to have as believers in this light.

Every single one of us who is a believer is qualified for those things. How many of us collect? We are qualified to be fruitful. We're qualified to be a fruit-bearing branch in the vine.

Every single one of us. How many of us succeed? How many of us become what we are qualified to be? Fortunately, the means and the answers to those questions is coming up. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

And right here, and I'm going to write on the board now, right here when he says, the Son of His love, we find out why he did not use his normal greeting back in verse 2. Remember, Paul typically opens his letters and says, Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. And in many manuscripts, if you've got an English Bible based on them, it'll say that. But it should have a little asterisk or italics there because the best manuscript witnesses don't have that phrase.

People just filled it in because they thought, well, Paul always says that, so let's put it in. But Paul began this letter by saying, Grace to you and peace from God our Father. Because he's going to work up to the subject of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father's love.

And he does it right here in verse 13. So then he says, The Son of His love in whom we have redemption through His blood. And that's verse 14.

I'm going to put a little note up here for verse 14. In whom we have redemption through His blood

the forgiveness of sins. Now we enter into this section of Paul's letter where he's talking about Jesus Christ directly.

Your English probably says in verse 15, he is the image of the invisible God. But in the Greek text, this literally says, who is? And this is, verse 15, who is? And this in Greek is, *has estin*. Who is? Now he's talking about the Son of His love.

And this is our subject. The Son of His love. Who is? And what is He? A. He's the image of the invisible God.

We went through in some detail last week what this has to do with. We looked at some of our image of God passages. We saw that Adam, the first man, was created in the image of God.

Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God. What else is He? He is the firstborn of all creation. So, verse 15 there, who is? And then we have, A. Image of the invisible God.

B. The firstborn of all creation. Now, what I would like to do is show you a structure in this passage that tells us something, that helps us understand all of these seemingly endless string of descriptive phrases that Paul uses about Jesus Christ. Because it's hard for us when we read through this in English and we say, He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

By Him, all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, etc., etc., etc. You read down through there and it just all starts kind of washing over our mind. We can't cope with each of these concepts as it comes up.

In Greek, it's a lot easier. If you know Greek, it's a lot easier. Because there's a structure here that is totally lost in the English, or nearly lost.

But I'd like to try to recover it because it will really help us see what the emphasis is and what the purpose is of this section. So if you'll bear with me, if you'll hang with me while I sketch this out, I think it will really help us make sense of it. He is the image, the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

Now verse 16, For by Him, all things were created. And this is our dative, locative, instrumental construction here, in, by, or with. I'm going to say in slash by Him.

And this is another key phrase. Our first key phrase was up here in verse 15. You might underline it.

Who is? We want to keep an eye on that one. Now in verse 16, For in Him, or by Him. And this is, in Greek, *Hati en autu*.

Hati en autu. This is the for, *hati*, and *en* is in, *autu* is Him. For in or by Him.

What happened? Well, A. All things were created. Now, what do we know about Jesus Christ? What's the main definition of Jesus Christ? He is the what? He's the God-man. He's fully divine.

He's fully human. He is undiminished deity and true humanity in one person forever. Right? So when Paul says all things were created by Him, what part of His essence are we talking about? Deity.

These all things were created. And what kind of all things? Things in heaven, things on earth, whether visible or invisible. You've got your thrones, your dominions, your principalities, your powers.

All things. This is our B. Again, all things were created. Then we have two prepositional phrases.

Through Him, through is dia, and your English probably says for Him, but it's literally unto Him, which is ace, with a view toward Him, with respect to Him. For Him, to Him, unto Him. It's kind of hard to get across in English.

But it's really important. And you need, I know it's going to be painful, but you need those Greek words. You need dia, through Him, and you need ace, unto Him, to Him, for Him.

Okay? If you've hung with me this far, you're doing well. Because we're almost halfway there. Now, verse 17.

And He is. This is another key phrase. In Greek, this is kai autos estin.

And He is, in verse 17. Another key phrase. What is He? He is A, before all things, and B, all things in Him cohere.

That's literal from the Greek, and that's the Greek word order. All things in Him cohere. Okay? Now, when you look at this, what we've got up here on the board, He is the image of the invisible God.

He's the firstborn of all creation. All things were created by Him. All things were created through Him and for Him.

He is before all things. All things in Him cohere. What is the perspective here? What's the emphasis? We're looking primarily at the deity of Jesus Christ, aren't we? And we're seeing from the standpoint of His deity, how does He relate to creation? Right? He's the origin of creation.

He is the firstborn of creation. Whether it's visible, invisible, in heaven, on earth. Whether it's angelic, thrones, dominions, prince, valleys, powers.

It's created through Him and with a view toward Him. With some purpose in mind with regard to Him. It's looking at Christ as the pre-existent second member of the Trinity, divine person,

primarily.

And how creation relates to Him. Then in verse 18, we have a very important statement. And He is... Another key phrase.

Same thing. Kai, Altos, Esten. And He is what? The head of the body, the church.

Remember many times in Scripture we've seen sort of a kaiastic structure where you have things starting out as kind of the left brackets of things and then you get to the center and then you start right bracketing back out. What you're looking at here in verses 14 through 17 are the left sides of some brackets. And this statement in verse 18 is right at the center.

He is the head of the body, the church. Because we're looking at Christ from the standpoint of His deity and how creation relates to Him. Now we're looking at Him as the head of the body, the church.

The ultimate expression of His relationship as the divine member of the Trinity to man is being head of the body, the church. It's fascinating when you start moving back out of this bracket. I'm going to have to start compressing here on the bottom half of my board.

But verse 19, guess what we have? For in or by Him, and this is *hati in autu*, does that look familiar? was pleased all the fullness to dwell. That's A under verse 19. B, through Him, this is *dia*, to reconcile all things unto Him.

And this is *ace*. Where have we seen that before? Through Him, unto Him. And you say, well, so what? Whether things in heaven, I'm thinking this must really be tedious on tape if you can't see the board, the guy just speaking in slow tones.

Whether things in heaven, actually things on earth, or things in heaven, having made peace, it's a very interesting word, having made peace. This is an aorist, active participle. One of your first year Greek rules that you memorize is, the action of the aorist participle precedes the action of the main verb.

So, if He's reconciled all things, having made peace, the having made peace had to come first before things could be reconciled. So, He made peace, how? Through the blood of His cross. Okay there, I fit the whole thing on the board.

Now, if you look at this, where did we start? In whom we have redemption? Through His blood. Where do we end up? Having made peace through the blood. That's one of our outermost layers here.

We have who is in verse 15, and down in verse 18, you know the reason that fit is I left a part out. Because down in verse 18 after you say, and He is the head of the body of the church, after that it says who is, and this is just what we have up here in verse 15, Ha Sestan, and what is He?

He's the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. Okay, that's all in verse 18.

So, here you have who is, the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation up in verse 15. He is the beginning and the firstborn from the dead in verse 18. Now, where is our great central point here? It's being the head of all things to the church, right? The head of the body of the church.

And so then, here's our second portion. So, in the same way that we started this first section, who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, now, this second section, after the great statement at the beginning of verse 18, He is the head of the body of the church, now we're going to shift perspectives. And we're going to see Christ in His humanity as He, in partaking of humanity, brings us up to God.

First, we saw Him as God, reaching down, as it were, toward creation. The direction flows from the divinity of Christ down to creation. Now, we're looking at Christ, who is the firstborn of all creation, in His humanity, moving in the direction of God, moving in the direction of divine things.

How does He do that? Well, He's the beginning. He's the firstborn from the dead. He's the first one to partake of human flesh that now has a resurrection body and eternal life.

So, now we're looking at the humanity of Christ. He is preeminent as deity with respect to creation. Now, we look at Him in creation, as a part of creation.

And when I say as a part of creation, anybody that's a real stickler theologian, I'm not getting into heresy. This is a viewpoint. It's presenting Christ as in His humanity, moving in the direction of God.

He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. In and by Him, up here in verse 16, what happened? All things were created, whether heaven on earth, visible, invisible, angels, whatever it might be. They're all created through Him and for Him.

Now, in this second section, what do you have? In and by Him, the fullness of deity dwells. How do you move from humanity back up toward God? The fullness of deity comes down into that humanity and dwells there. And that's how you start at humanity and end up at God.

Here we started at Godhood and divinity and worked toward creation. Now, the fullness of deity is pleased to dwell in Him. And through Him, to reconcile all things unto Him, echoes what was set up in verse 16 in terms of creation.

Now you have it in terms of reconciliation. And then finally, you have whether things on earth or things in heaven, they're all reconciled in the same way that all things were created, whether things in heaven or things on earth. So, you see, if we can outline the structure a little bit and start looking at the way that Paul is comparing these things and balancing them on each side of that central point, which is right here.

He is the head of the body, the church. Because that's our point of contact. That's where we fit into the picture.

And once we see this and see the place that Christ occupies in God's plan, the specifics of it, we know generally that He's at the center and He's the celebrity of the universe and so forth. But to see specifically here, Paul is mapping this out. Why is he doing this? Is he just giving us some grand theology? There's a reason why he's spelling these things out in such detail.

We're going to pause and take our break and when we come back, we'll see that and then move forward into the next chapter where it all comes together by way of application for us. Let's pause and take our break.