

Fully Functional Faith **Colossians 1:9-20**

MPT: Paul encourages the Colossians in their faith as they face false teachers and he reassures them that their faith is founded in the person and work of Christ Jesus

MPS: Believers today can have a fully functional faith by resting in the Supremacy and sufficiency of Christ.

Introduction:

Have you ever had a moment when you were driving down the road and your check engine light came on? Or you just knew something was wrong with your vehicle because it had just been acting differently?

Or maybe have you ever owned a tool or really anything that can be used and after some wear and tear it just loses its shine or maybe a piece breaks off and it just doesn't work the same way anymore?

Regardless if it's still somewhat working, we often just consider it broken and we disregard it unless it is obviously valuable and fixable! See these things are just not fully functioning anymore!

There is an often unspoken appreciation for the functionality of things to be the way they were intended to be. To be fully functional is to work as expected, most of the time things get broken when used in unintended ways.

Let me ask you a question, do you have a fully functional faith?

See, in order to truly live as Christ intended for us, our faith needs to be working properly. I believe that we can determine that by running a couple diagnostics on our faith by asking ourselves 2 questions.

What Jesus are you worshiping?

Is that Jesus enough?

If you have your bibles and I hope that you do, please turn with me to Colossians chapter 1. Say “word” when you get there. **Read: 9-20**

Today we are going to break this passage into 2 different sections, pull out a few biblical principles and then apply those principles to our lives! But before we do that, let's understand a little bit of the background of Colossians.

Background:

The Apostle Paul wrote the book of Colossians while in prison. While Paul planted many of the churches he wrote to, he actually never went to Colossae. While in prison Paul was visited by Epaphras who told him of the faith of the church in Colossae as well as mentioned things they were struggling with!

Paul was moved by what God was doing in their life and was compelled to encourage them in some theological truths, so he penned this letter.

Paul wanted to address two schools of thought that the Colossian church was being influenced by. One was Pantheism and polytheistic worship and the other was a select group of people called the Judaizers.

The culture in Colossae was a Greek influenced pantheistic culture! Pantheism is the worship of the universe as God and attributes deity among many manifestations of God. They wanted to welcome Jesus as a deity but wanted to include him in the pantheon of deities they already had.

The Judaizers on the other hand acknowledged Jesus as Messiah, but insisted on the new Colossian believers to adopt the law and customs of the Jewish people in order to be fully formed into a follower of God. Jesus wasn't enough, but their righteousness also depended on their accomplishments in the law.

So, Paul who is aware of these influences wrote this letter with the main theme of presenting the supremacy and the sufficiency of Christ. That meaning: Jesus is supreme over all things and sufficient for salvation.

The reason I give all this background is because it is so important to understand what this text meant to the Colossians, in order to understand what it means to us today. Context is always king when studying scripture. Because a text can never mean something today that it didn't mean back then! So let us just look at the text and break it down! Disclaimer, this can be a lot more exhaustive than I am going to make it today. There is a lot in this passage and I want to hit the highlights for us

I. Paul's Prayer For The Colossians Vs. 9-14

Three things that I want us to see in this section are the character, the content, and the purpose of Paul's prayer.

a. The Character of Paul's Prayer vs 9a

First, and very briefly, we just see the character of Paul in this prayer and even just in the existence of this letter to the church. Paul did not know this church, he didn't plant it nor was associated with them at all, but in his hearing of their faith, he immediately began to pray and prayed consistently with thanksgiving for what God had done in their lives and with concern for protection against false prophets.

Could you imagine what your prayer life and your relationships were like if you prayed this way for your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ? What Character do we see from Paul?! This Christ-like Character that he embodied also helped him to have the voice that he did when instructing the churches on how to live for Christ, because he did it!

We see this fleshed out in the content and the purpose of his prayer

b. The Content Of Paul's Prayer vs 9b

Paul says that his prayer was for them to be filled with the knowledge of the will of God in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Now in the following verses he is going to get into his purpose and the means to achieving this knowledge, but I want us to see something here. The word used here for knowledge is *epignosis*.

This word gives the connotation of a complete or perfect knowledge. Not something one gains by intellectual exertion, but experienced through a relationship with him. Peter uses this same word when speaking of how a husband knows their wife.

You cannot simply study and know all the correct theological terms about God and claim that you know God. This word implies an intimacy with Him!

Paul caveats this prayer for knowledge with the phrase with wisdom and spiritual understanding. This implies that the things we learn and experience with God are not just things we store as information, but become applied knowledge that we are lived out in our lives! And this is the purpose of Paul's prayer!

c. The Purpose of Paul's Prayer vs 10-14

Paul states his purpose with the phrase 'so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord'

So let's keep the structure of what Paul is saying here. He is telling the colossian believers, "I am praying that you grow in your knowledge of God with wisdom and understanding so that they may walk worthy of the relationship that they have with him.

Think of it like this. Some of you may have teenagers or have had them before, I work with them all the time, and will be going to camp so I'm going to have a similar conversation like this. But when you are sending them off on their own to either hang out with friends or stay the night somewhere or just going out in public, what do you say? "Remember, you don't just represent yourself, you... [represent this family]

Paul is saying here, that you should have such a closeness with God and understanding of his will that your representation of him means something to you!

He then gives three clear ways that we put this relationship on display

- 1. Bearing fruit of good works**
- 2. Being patiently enduring**
- 3. Giving thanks for salvation**

Let's walk through these quickly as they are written. Read VS 10-14.

10. We see that when we bear the fruit of the holy spirit which comes from a close walk with God through our obedience to the good works commanded by God, then we continue to grow in our knowledge and closeness with God!

Eph 2:10

11. Then as we are relying on the spirit of God and following in obedience, we become strengthened to endure this world with patience because we understand this last part in vs **12-14**

12-14. God himself qualifies us to walk worthy of him. He is the author of our faith and the one who makes it fully functioning!

In a sermon on this very same passage, Pastor and theologian Alistair Begg said this

Alistair Begg- “We have not been made right with God on the basis of anything done by us nor are we put right with God on the basis of anything done in us. We have been put right with God on the basis of that which has been done for us.”

He went on to say “A change in status results in a change of Character!”

Paul wrote and lived these things with the character of Christ because of what Christ had done for him! The work of Jesus is enough!

But before you can rest in the finished work of Jesus, we have to make sure you understand who this Jesus is! Remember, Paul is writing to present the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ! So after he introduces his prayer for them he immediately goes into what we call the Hymn of Christ.

Now, this is probably one of the most theologically dense and masterfully written passages of scripture on the deity of Christ. We are only going to highlight it very quickly but I encourage you to go and study this passage on your own and let it inform your worship!

II. The Hymn Of Christ Vs 15-20

Whether this hymn is something Paul created on his own or if it was something the early church knew well already is not known, but it is clear that very early on the church was esteeming the highest of honor in the name of Jesus! Not only is he the son of God, but he is God! And He is Lord! We don't have the time to completely unpack the doctrine of the trinity this morning, but through a systematic study of Scripture, we see Jesus on multiple occasions made out to be God. He claimed it himself. He said before Abraham was I AM. John wrote that in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God, and we have this expression of the deity of Christ! The church knew it and they believed Jesus is LORD! He wasn't just a guy who died for them to have fire insurance, but he was the supreme creator of the world worthy of worship.

Two things I want us to see from this hymn, though there are much more.

It is broken up into two stanzas. The first proclaims Jesus is Lord over Creation, the second: Jesus is Lord over New Creation

a. **Jesus is Lord over Creation. Vs 15-17**

Very simple the Jesus we worship is completely worthy of our worship because he created us for that purpose! All things were created through him and FOR him.

The implication of that is, your life is not your own!

HE is the heir of creation, HE is the goal of creation. We were created for HIS purpose, pleasure, and praise!

Not only that, but he is holding all of creation together!

I want you to know, that even when it seems like your world is falling apart, Jesus is still holding it together

b. Jesus is Lord over New Creation. Vs 18-20

We have already talked about Jesus being the author of our faith and the redemption of our sins, but do you realize that his sacrifice has made him the Lord or the head of the Church?

This church is not ours. We must submit to the lordship of Christ as he is the author of our faith and the center of our worship!

Often, scripture references the church as a body and its people are members of it, but it only ever refers to Christ as the head. That's because anything without a head is dead, and anything with more than one head is a monster!

Worship Christ alone as the Lord of creation and the head of the church!

What Paul is teaching the colossians here and also us is that Jesus is the Lord and supreme over all and he is enough for our salvation! All you and I need for fully functioning faith is to rest it in the person and work of Christ!

C.S. Lewis popularized the Liar, Lunatic, Lord argument for the deity of Christ.

He said that Jesus was either a Liar, and completely deceived everyone and could not be trusted; a lunatic who was completely off his marble. Or he was the Lord he claimed to be.

Now Jesus was no lunatic, that's the hyperbole of the argument. So, you have to decide if you believe he is a liar or if he is Lord!

If you truly believe he is Lord, then the next diagnostic is, Is he enough for you?

Stop making Jesus a liar with the way you live your life.

We are often quick to say yes Jesus is the way, but i think we find ourselves living like the judaizers and are just adding him on top of everything else we do and make a liar out of Jesus!

Let him be enough for you today, stop trying to make yourself right before God and let Jesus do that for you!