

## Colossians Pt. 2

### Col 1:13-23

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My question for you this morning:

#### ***Have you ever lost track of yourself?***

- Maybe for a long season, for a really good reason
- maybe started by hardship or grief
- maybe you got distracted and your priorities were out of whack
  - Maybe you are currently in that season and you know it's happening.
  - Sometimes we lose our grounding and we don't know what is happening until afterwards.
  - This happened to Paul: His whole life was him not knowing which way is up. He had been devoted to the Jewish faith and was well educated and was seeking God. But then Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus and he hit the floor: he hadn't known which way was up even though he thought he did.
- It's important for us to know which way is up so we can live in reality.



The passage today (Col 1:13-23) is really a **poem** about Jesus that Paul actually wrote (instead of him using a quote from elsewhere).

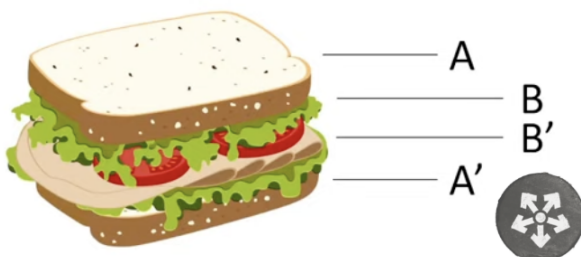
The **topic** of this poem is

- what we should know about Jesus
- how we should respond.

Paul was a good jazz musician! Some of you know jazz, which is like a musical poem. In the Greek language, there are no periods; everything is run together. So in some of our Bibles, you might find this passage translated as if it were prose and in others, it looks like a poem. It is more like a poem because poetic features like repetition and parallelism.

It will be helpful to briefly learn about sometime called Chiastic Structure:

### Chiastic Structure



This is when ideas in the text form a **mirror image** of each other like a sandwich. It starts with an unfamiliar idea A, builds with familiar idea B, repeats B (in maybe a little different way) and then goes back to the new idea A.

In the Western world, we expect more of a chronological or categorical structure but chiasmic structure is actually a useful mnemonic device. This means it is a way to remember things as you speak since most language at the time Colossians was written was spoken, not written. This chiasmic structure uses your footsteps to help you remember. You might step forward, to the side, and then back again. A-B-B-A.

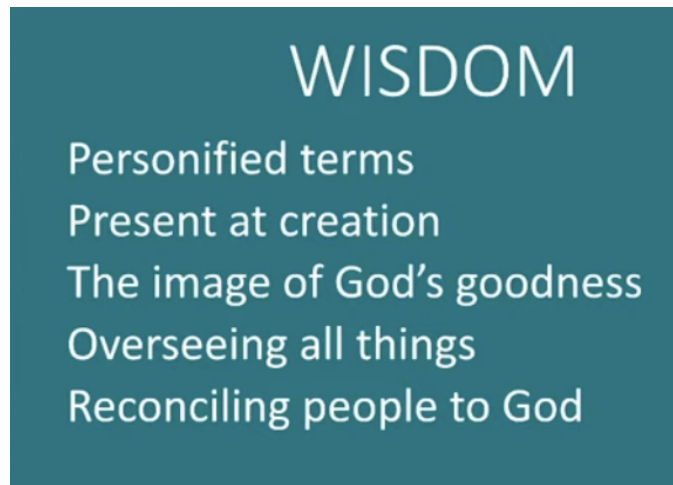
Paul really wants us to remember: he wants us to remember what he is saying about Jesus. In jazz and other music (including Village music) you might introduce a song and then introduce another song people already know. Maybe you add Twinkle Twinkle Little Star in the middle, then repeat it in the minor key, and then go back to the beginning.

Wisdom also has this:

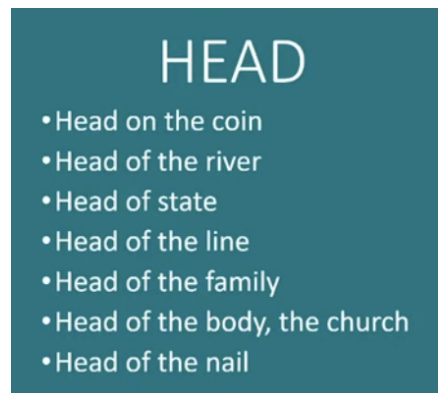
Wisdom was contemplation of beauty and the seeking of God and making good choices. In the Bible this is called Wisdom literature.

Proverbs 8 and the book of Job are good places to start. Here, wisdom is spoken about as if it's personified (see box to the left). Being a friend of wisdom was on the road to becoming a friend of God.

Paul tells us **wisdom is embodied in Jesus**.



Jesus as **head**: The idea for head comes up in all these ways seen in the box below:



Jesus could be represented as

- head on a coin or painting: Jesus IS the image of God, the rest are created IN the image of God. When you look at him, you are just seeing the Father.
- A river starts at the head: Jesus is the origin point.
- Head of the state, the line (timeline)
- Head of the family (firstborn: the person who was born first but it also includes the meaning of inheritance and the person who was running the family. Jesus is pleased to share his inheritance with us.
- Head of the body
- head of the nail: where things come to a head (Jesus took our consequences on himself but also the head of the pin, the point where everything comes together).

He is **head over everything**, stated in these different ways. Consider the Greek word: PAS which means *everything*.



**15** The Son is the image of the invisible God, **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.

Do you hear the wisdom themes coming together in this passage? He is the origin; (through him) he is before all things and in him all things hold together. Everything that has happened up to this point is because of Him. So this is point A (from the poetic structure we talked about earlier). Then we get the lettuce and some of the fillings: the middle of the poem. These were all things people already knew. But now he will build on this:

**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.

All things AND the church (a new idea). He is also the first born from among the dead (a new idea): he is over the resurrection life that we are living in now and are headed towards.

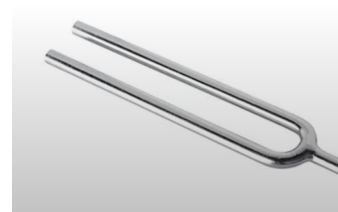
**9** For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,

God wanted all his fullness to be in a person!

**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.

Jesus is doing reconciliation: this is expressed in different ways: People, groups, but also to be in harmony. Jesus is putting all creation into harmony with God. **Reality is going to be harmonious!**

A tuning fork in music always plays an A (440 hertz), a true consistent note. If you hit a tuning fork with a band playing little off tune and everyone tunes to this note, they will play harmony. Jesus is that for us!



a  
in

The first half of this passage is what we need to know about Jesus. If you want to know who Jesus is, go to this passage in Colossians. Paul did a good job: People often memorized it and they knew it.

The second half of this passage is about **our response** to the first part.

### Col 1:21-23

**21** Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.

Our evil behavior shows we are **out of tune** with God.

**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—

Here is another Gospel part!

**23** if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel.

Faith is an allegiance: we bring our lives into submission of the rightful ruler. Roman 8 says we will be saved IF (look up this vs).

Paul wants us to hunker down in the gospel, a gravity term. It is a HOPE that is not wishful thinking but is more like a reservation at a fine restaurant: you believe when you arrive you will have a table. We see our salvation written in the book of life. We have a HOPE.

**IF** ... you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel.

The word IF is puzzling: Does it mean we can mess this up? I don't think so. I think we have a new identity and are reconciled, you stay reconciled. This is saying to **keep living this reality**. We can live in a place where we can lose track of what is up and we aren't living in allegiance to Jesus. We become less fruitful and joyful when we aren't living in this reality. Paul

wants us to continue in this reality, knowing where Jesus is at the top.

**24** 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.

Paul is asking us to believe THIS gospel: Paul has allegiance to Jesus and he has a job to do.



A **plumb line** is a tool that people still use today. The top is attached to the scaffolding at the top of the building and the bottom aims at the center of the earth by gravity, making it always straight and true.

**Colossians 1 is a plumbline:** you let it drop and you cannot go wrong. When we live lives that are in line with the reality of Jesus at the top and faith and hope at the bottom, the rest of creation looks at us and knows which way is UP. This is important not only to us but because we reflect reality to others.

**How do you need to recalibrate?** Is it in relationships, things you're doing or building that are out of line with Jesus and with faith and hope? If you have lost hope, your building is shifting.

I personally have longer seasons where I lose track of myself. But daily I lose track because I'm a people pleaser: I don't want conflict. When I'm living this way in these great desires (to agree with people and live without conflict), the bottom of my building has moved: my gravity has shifted. My allegiance also changes: It goes from what Jesus is doing to things about myself. I might even switch my allegiance to you because I think you can give me what I want.

This is hard: I need to repent and proclaim Jesus as Lord and put my hope in the gospel. Even if what I'm doing causes conflict, **it's OK**.

-How do you need to recalibrate?

Is there a demand gone wrong? A relationship? Something you haven't done yet?

To reiterate: **Jesus is the wisdom of God revealed. Jesus is the point.** As we hunker down in faith and hope, we can communicate this to the world around us.