

**COLOSSIANS: DISCERNING TRUE DOCTRINES**  
**"Part II: Trusting The All-Sovereign Jesus To Complete His Church"**  
**(Colossians 1:15-23)**

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

We can get discouraged in viewing the failings or weaknesses of people in the church, for these insufficiencies can seem to block the Church's ever fulfilling its mission:

(1) Following our Annual Meeting, a Church member reported to me how she had spoken with a friend who liked what **another** church offered by way of facilities and the expanded ministries *its* facilities offered, but didn't want to drive so far to attend there.

Well, this member was just about to recommend Nepaug to her friend when she stopped herself short, thinking, "How can I recommend this party come to **Nepaug** when we don't have as extended a ministry program as does that other church, and Nepaug's facilities fall so far **short** of what that **other** church offers?" So, she ended up keeping quiet about Nepaug to her friend!

Then this member read my remarks in the Pastor's Report of the Annual Meeting that noted my eighteen-year "wish" for a new church facility toward developing a fuller ministry program. So her final word was, "Since the tendency at Nepaug is to push our repair or program development needs into a corner because the cost or work involved is too great, **how** can we **ever** obtain this 'wish' of yours?!"

**This member reflected a DISCOURAGEMENT at the human FRAILTIES that LIMIT our addressing Church plant and program issues.**

(2) This discouragement at human weakness that hinders Church development is widespread. Years ago I attended a workshop on Church Sunday School development at a statewide Sunday School convention in Nebraska. After the leader was all finished talking about building a 200 member Sunday School up to say a thousand, somebody asked, "What if our **whole church** doesn't even number a **100** people?! Will your ideas work in **our** church?!"

The leader paused, then said, "I guess I'd have to have **more** people than **that** to **know how** to **begin** to develop the program!"

I recall some people in the room almost **groaning** in response! They had come from **small** churches and were going home frustrated!

**When we see the *failings* of human beings in the Church, how do we DEAL with its discouraging affect OURSELVES?**

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

***Need:* "When I see the inadequacies of other Christians along with my OWN, it seems an IMPOSSIBLE dream for the Church ever to develop its program and fulfill its mission! Any ideas here?!"**

**I. Paul wrote Colossians to COUNTER errant teachings that held Jesus to be of LIMITED power and sovereignty in the Church:**

A. The Colossians had been infiltrated with a false **syncretism** of Judaism, mysticism and gnosticism, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, p. 1690.

B. This **syncretism** held Jesus to be of **limited** power and sovereignty:

1. It was asserted by this syncretism that Jesus was only the physical son of the union of Joseph and Mary, a denial of His virgin birth.
2. The error taught the "Christ" **descended on** Jesus at His baptism, revealed to him the "Father", worked miracles through him and **left** him when he suffered, died and rose again, Lightfoot, Col., p. 111.

**II. So, in writing to detail the ABSOLUTE DIVINE power and sovereignty of Jesus Christ, Paul revealed how COMPLETELY the CHURCH ITSELF is wonderfully DISCIPLED by Jesus Christ:**

A. Paul **first** taught Jesus Christ is the Creator God of **nature** 1:15-17:

1. He claimed Jesus is the (KJV, NIV) "image of the invisible God," meaning the "exact representation of [the Father's] being," Bible Knowledge Commentary, N.T., p. 672, Col. 1:15a (cf. Heb. 1:3).
2. The word "image" is better rendered "form" [from **eikon**] in Paul's description of the same quality in Philippians 2:6-7, and that means the "very substance or essential embodiment of" the Father!
3. He claimed Jesus is the "firstborn" of every creature, not meaning Jesus was **created**, but carries the **headship** of Creation as though He were the eldest Son of all that was made, Col. 1:15b, *Ibid*.
  - a. Jesus is the **protokos**, "Firstborn" rather than **protoktisis**, "first-created": The Greek term is **protokos** here, *Ibid*.
  - b. As such, He (a) **precedes** in **time** all that was created, and (b) is sovereign over all that is created, *Ibid*.
4. Paul then listed the following reasons for this headship, 1:16-17:
  - a. Jesus Christ **created ALL things**, Col. 1:16a,b: whether they are in heaven or on earth, whether they be visible (man) or invisible principalities (angels, demons, cf. Eph. 6:12), He made them all!

- b. All things were made **FOR Christ**, Colossians 1:16c.
  - c. Jesus existed **before** all **created** things had come into being, Col. 1:17a [Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex., s. v. "**pro**," p. 708]
  - d. In fact, by means of Jesus Christ, all that has been created **right NOW** "hold together" (NIV), Col. 1:17b with Heb. 1:3b.
- B. Paul **then** taught Jesus Christ is the Creator, Sustainer and **COMPLETER** of the **spiritual creation** of the **Church**, Col. 1:18-23:
- 1. Paul noted Christ is the Head of the Church by being the "firstborn" (**prototokos**, **not protoktisis** again), for He was the first to have an eternally resurrected body, Col. 1:18a,b. That gives Jesus Christ **preeminence** in all matters related to the Church, Colossians 1:18c.
  - 2. He taught Jesus was given this position through the resurrection by the Father, for the Father wanted Him to embody all the fullness of the entire **Church** and **triumphantly** fulfill its **history** (1:19-23):
    - a. Paul said the Father made Jesus the "firstborn" by His resurrection to tie up in Jesus everything (in the Church), 1:19.
    - b. Paul details this in Col. 1:20-23: (a) By death and resurrection, Jesus heads up the reconciliation of everything in the Church to God, Col. 1:20. This includes a proper alignment to God of all that is sinful in the universe though that will come by judgment, cf. Ryrie St. Bib., KJV, fn. to Col. 1:20. (b) This means God has **positionally** reconciled all believers to Himself through Christ's cross, Col. 1:21. (c) Someday, this will mean taking **all** believers via the rapture to heaven to be **experientially** holy, unblameable and unproveable in His **presence**, Col. 1:22. (d) **Since** [1st class condition for the "If" in verse 23a, cf. U.B.S. Grk. N.T., p. 695] believers **will** continue in faith and grounded and settled regarding the hope of the gospel, this **destiny** for **EVERYONE** in the **Church** is a **REALITY**, Colossians 1:23!

**Application:** *To deal with the discouragement at the imperfections of people and Church facilities or program underdevelopment as a result, (1) believe in Christ as Savior to belong to His discipling ministry, Jn. 3:16. (2) Then, if we have sinned SINCE faith in Christ, we should confess it to God for a return to fellowship with Him, 1 Jn. 1:9. (3) Then, trusting the Able Christ to get ALL in the true Church to heaven SPOTLESS, ABOUND in service by a focus on Christ and His Word regardless WHAT happens or DOES NOT happen with Church facility improvement or ministry program development, for our work is NOT in VAIN in Christ, 1 Cor. 15:58!*

**Lesson:** *Jesus, the Creator and Sustainer God of NATURE is also the Head, Creator and Sustainer God of the CHURCH Who will thus capably BRING it to a spotless, wonderful COMPLETION in the heavenlies!*

**Conclusion:** (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . . )

Some events have occurred **this week** since I spoke with the concerned Church member after the Annual Meeting, and these reveal **God's** ideas about our church's building and program development:

- (1) Last **Sunday**, some **first-time** visitors told me they had recently been in another church which has a newer facility than ours, yet claimed they were so impressed by people **here** welcoming them **unlike** they had known **there** that they signed up for **our** Valentine's Banquet!
- (2) Then, on **Tuesday**, I got a call from Marshall Klimasewski. He announced our Church would have its Internet web site set up that day! We have been given a ministry where our **Bible teaching** notes can be **downloaded** anywhere, potentially reaching around the **world**!
- (3) Next, **Tuesday night**, due to a **series** of **VERY unusual** events, I drove past a **new** church that I hear has **extensive** programs. Yet, I know that group's leaders deny cardinal doctrines about Christ, the Trinity and the written Bible! I found myself saying, "I'd rather be at Nepaug than go there **any** day **regardless** of the church plant issue!"
- (4) Later, on **Wednesday**, I received a circular in the mail from Dallas Seminary (Connection, Winter, 2000). It featured an interview with Dr. Pentecost, my seminary Bible professor who is cited as saying, "The great **need** across evangelicalism is **exposition** of the **Scriptures**. I sense there is a departure from that, even among some of our own grads who are entertaining the people, giving the people what they want, whereas we are **called** to **teach** the **Word**. It is the **Word** that is the power of God to salvation, it is the **Word** that is the power for Christian living, and I would want them to make the **Word** the **center** of their **ministry**. It may **not** be **popular**, it may **not** build mega-churches, but it **will** fulfill that to which they are **called** . . ."

**Wednesday** and commented on how nice it looked. As I noted **before**, the decorating was done (a) over **5 years** (b) by **various** and (c) **unconnected** parties, meaning **God** made the **setting** conducive to **Scripture study**!

What I've **mentioned** in closing here displays **GOD'S** view of our building and program: **HE** wants us to **FOCUS** on teaching and applying His **true** Word and **HE** will supply what **FACILITY** or **PROGRAM** improvement is needed to spread **HIS truth** to the **WORLD**! **OUR** part is to focus on **HIM** and His **WORD, period!**