

The Book of Colossians

Experiencing Christ the Creator and Redeemer

Dear Friends,

Nothing short of a personal revolution takes place when Jesus is the center of one's life. For, no one but Jesus Christ occupies the center of creation and salvation. In this dynamic book of Colossians Paul shows us how Jesus is not only the human embodiment of God but also the visible expression of the "fullness" of God. (Colossians 1:19;2:9) He points out that Jesus is "all, and is in all"(Col.3:11) plus many more important facts concerning who Christ is. Discovering who Christ is though, is not enough unless we place our trust in Him. When this happens the miraculous peace of God can rule in our hearts.(Col.3:15)

"We have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints—the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored for you in heaven."(Col.1:4,5) Please go on and read Colossians 1:9-14 and describe the benefits and responsibilities that come from having Christ as the center of your life.

Frequently we fail in fulfilling God's two greatest mandates which include being stewards of creation and participating with Him in His work of redemption. Colossians 1:13-16 declares, "For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created: things in Heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him.

No matter how hard we try, it is impossible to separate God's work of creation and His work of redemption. Jesus is the unifying force in the universe. "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together."(Col.1:17) Jesus is the one who frees us from "the dominion of darkness" where we are possessed by our possessions and He gives us a love for all of life. Christ's death and resurrection was not only for the benefit of mankind but for all of creation. "For God was pleased to have all of His fullness dwell in Him, 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".(Col.1:19,20) I Corinthians

4:1,2 says, we have commissioned as believers to realize we are “servants of Christ” and those “entrusted with (stewardship) of the secret things of God”. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. Jesus is creator and reconciler, yet many who call on His name have no concern about being stewards of His creation. We cannot be stewards of the earth unless we have an emotional bond with creation. With God’s help we must learn to look deeply into each created part of life in order that we may see its hidden spiritual dimension.

George Washington Carver in a brief essay entitled “How to Search for Truth” printed in W. J. Federer’s book shows us how to do this. He states, “in the 12th chapter of Job and the 7th & 8th verses we are urged thus: ‘But ask now the beasts and they shall teach thee: and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee. Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee’”.

“More and more as we come closer and closer in touch with nature and its teachings are we able to see the Divine and are therefore fitted to interpret correctly the various languages spoken by all forms of nature about us”.

“From the frail little mushroom, which seems to spring up in a night and perish ere the morning sun sinks to rest in the western horizon, to the giant red woods of the Pacific slope that have stood the storms for centuries and vie with the snow-capped peaks of the loftiest mountains, in their magnificence and grandeur”. “First, to me, nature in its varied forms are little windows through which God permits me to commune with Him, and to see much of His glory, majesty, and power by simply lifting the curtain and looking in”.

Second, I love to think of nature as unlimited broadcasting stations, through which God speaks to us everyday, every hour and every moment of our lives, if we will only tune in and remain so”.

“Third, I am more and more convinced, as I search for truth that no ardent student of nature, can ‘Behold the lilies of the field’; or ‘Look unto the hill’, or study even the microscopic wonders of a stagnant pool of water, and honestly declare himself to be an infidel”.

“To those who have as yet not learned the secret of true happiness, which is the joy of coming into the closest relationship with the Maker and Preserver of all things: begin now to study the little things in your own back yard, going from the

known to the nearest related unknown for indeed each new truth brings one nearer to God”.

I might add to what George Washington Carver has said by stating “caring for creation is an essential act of worship”. Psalm 148 shares how all of creation worships the Living God. For this reason every action which has an impact on creation must be carried out with the question, “will this act sustain or damage creation’s ability to glorify God?” After all, creation itself proclaims the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ with the planting of every seed in the ground and the resurrection of each plant that follows as it comes forth from that ground.

Psalm 104, beautifully describes how God orchestrates the functioning of His world with music which no symphony could ever hope to imitate. When sin invaded God’s wonderful world His love extended to the sending of His Son Jesus Christ to redeem and re-create this sin stricken world.(Col.1:20) This redemptive re-creation process involves the reclaiming of human hearts through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now the followers of Christ have a mandate to image God, not just spiritually but physically to care for God’s creation, living established and firm in the hope of the gospel.

“Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. 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—if you continue in your faith, established and firm not moved from the hope held out in the gospel”.(Col.1:21-23 NIV)

There is much we can learn about our wonderful Creator by looking closely at His creation. Creation demonstrates for us the mystery of the resurrection while the scriptures share with us how to know personally Jesus Christ who reveals to us the mystery of God.

“I want you woven into a tapestry of love, in touch with everything there is to know of God. Then you will have minds, confident and at rest, focused on Christ, God’s great mystery. All the richest treasures of wisdom and knowledge are embedded in that mystery and nowhere else.”(Col.2:2,3 The Message Bible) “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness”.(Col. 2:6,7 NIV) “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.”(Col.2:9,10 NIV) “If it’s an initiation ritual

you're after, you're already been through it by submitting to baptism. Going under the water was a burial of your old life; coming up out of it was a resurrection. God raising you from the dead as He did Christ, when you were stuck in your old sin-dead life, you were incapable of responding to God. God brought you alive—right along with Christ! Think of it! All sins forgiven, the slate wiped clean, that old arrest warrant canceled and nailed to Christ's cross. He stripped all the spiritual tyrants in the universe of their sham authority at the cross and marched them naked through the streets".(Col.2:12-15 The Message Bible) "They're completely out of touch with the source of life, Christ, who puts us together in one piece, whose very breath and blood flow through us. He is the Head and we are the body. We can grow up healthy in God only as He nourishes us."(Col.2:19 TMB)

The fullness of God lives in Christ. To know and understand Jesus is to know and understand God.(see also John 1:1,14,18;8:19;14:6-11 and 1 John 2:23) Remember all things were created for Jesus. Creation was not to be only for human resources.(Col.1:16) Jesus holds it all together (Col.1:17) Jesus is the Head of the church (Col.1:18) and everything else (Col.2:10). That being the case we are now given very specific instructions in Colossians 3 and 4 on how we are to live:

1. We are to set our hearts and minds on things above and not on the things on earth. (Col.3:1-4)
2. Put to death what belongs to the earthly nature like sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed.(Col.3:5-7)
3. Also get rid of anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language and lying.(Col.3:8-10)
4. As God's chosen people be compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, patient, and forgiving, filled with love.(Col.3:12-14)
5. Let the peace of Christ fill you as you let the word of God live within you. Teaching and correcting one another with wisdom as you praise God with songs of gratitude.(Col.3:15,16) "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."(Col.3:17 NIV)
6. With Jesus as Lord, Savior and Head of our lives our relationships with others will change for the good. Wives will submit to their husbands who will love them and not be harsh with them. Children are to obey their parents and fathers are not to embitter their children. Employees must obey their employers doing their work for the glory of God. Employers are to be fair to their employees knowing that it is to God they will have to answer to. (Col. 3:18-4:1)

7. “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful”. (Col.4:2 NIV) Let us pray for opportunities to share the gospel of Jesus Christ and as we pray let us look for such opportunities. We need to faithfully pray for others including the poor and those who are in prison.(Col.4:2-18)

Remember as you pray, work to preserve creation, care, for the poor, share the gospel or anything else; “do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”(Col.3:17) We must never forget that our lives are to reflect the love of Jesus, since it is Christ Himself we are representing.(Matt.5:14-16) Living and praying the name of Jesus is to live and pray empowered with the authority to act on His behalf. Peter and John are an example of this. Please read Acts 3:6-10 and describe what happened when they prayed in the name of Jesus. As you read on in Acts 3 to Acts 4 you will discover that when Peter and John are brought before the Sanhedrin and asked, “By what power or what name did you do this?” (Acts 4:7) Peter filled with the Holy Spirit responds, “It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone’. Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men (and women) by which we must be saved”.(Acts 4:10-12)

Knowing that salvation and all authority of life is found in Jesus Christ we are now called to submit every area of our being to Him. “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”(Phil.2:10,11) As you pray and do all through the authority of Jesus Christ, you will see Him do a mighty work beyond your greatest imagination in you and through you.

George Washington Carver, whose words were cited earlier in this study, was a man who sought God and who God used to create over 300 uses for the peanut, over one hundred and eighteen for the sweet potato, with over sixty for the pecan and other usage for soy bean, okra etc.. William J. Federer in his book “George Washington Carver His Life and Faith in His Own Words,” quotes these words from a speech Carver gave November 19, 1924. “God is going to reveal to us things He never revealed before if we put our hands in His. No books ever go into my laboratory. The thing I am to do and the way of doing it are revealed to me. I never have to grope for

methods. The method is revealed to me the moment I am inspired to create something new. Without God to draw aside the curtain I would be helpless” Federer, who also includes Carver’s statements in his book that were used earlier in this study goes on to quote a letter Carver wrote the editor of the New York Times Nov. 24,1924. “My dear Sir, I have read with much interest your editorial pertaining to myself in the issue of November 20th. I regret exceedingly that such a gross misunderstanding should arise as to what was meant by ‘Divine inspiration.’ Inspiration is never at variance with information; in fact, the more information one has, the greater will be the inspiration. Paul, the great scholar, says in 2Timothy 2:15, ‘study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth’. Again he says in Gal.1:12, ‘For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ’”.

As we reflect on these words by George Washington Carver, may I ask where is the man or woman today who will take literally the words of scripture, and in the authority of Jesus Christ will begin to seek Him as they experiment in search of alternative energies to the polluting fossil fuels our world is addicted to? The one who believes that God is the source of all energy knows that there is no energy crisis. The only crisis that exists is that of faith when it comes to the people of God exercising the authority that is theirs in the name of Jesus Christ. Just the sun itself, which all true believers know that God has created, showers upon us in just a few days energy that is equivalent to all the fossil fuel energy in the world. The time has come for the people of God to arise and exercise the authority of Jesus Christ who has come to set the captives free, including those dependent on the big oil companies and utility companies. Let us believe God to show us how to use clean renewable energy in order to prevent further global warming and in the name of Jesus show us how to create and use alternative clean energy that will be available to all to the Glory of God.

Remember whether it is the creation and use of clean renewable energy or anything else that is needed to help the hurting and homeless, we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

Yours in Christ’s service

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