

Paul's Song: Rooted in Glory! (Colossians 1:15-23)

To Read:

1. Proverbs 8
2. II Corinthians 3:7-4:6

1 I. Introduction

A. This morning we're continuing in Colossians, moving into Paul's second section in Colossians 1:15-23

1. But, again, before we start, I want to return to our purpose statement and remember what Colossians is about
 - 1 a. Colossians calls us to see how truly glorious Jesus is and to root all of our hope in Him knowing that He is true wisdom to meet our every need. This will prevent us from instead pursuing the hopes and purposes of this world and being captured by worldly wisdom.
- 1 2. And I want us to remember where we are in Colossians; last week we divided Colossians into four sections
 - 1 a. Rooted in the Gospel (~ chapter 1)
 - 1 b. Refusing Worldly Wisdom (~ chapter 2)
 - 1 c. Renewed in Christ (~ chapter 3)
 - 1 d. Relational Truth (~ chapter 4)

2 B. Last week, we started into the first section, Rooted in the Gospel, and looked at Paul's prayer for the Colossians

- 3 2 1 1. And we saw that the gospel had come to the Colossians - it had given them a new hope that had produced faith in them which had worked out in love for fellow believers which should lead to thankfulness for the gospel
2. Paul described a cycle that will keep bringing the Colossians back to the gospel, which in turn will keep increasing all of the things that flow from the gospel, which will lead back to the gospel again
3. Paul started, even in his prayer, to build a foundation for the rest of the book - a foundation that the Colossians could continue to rest their hope in - the gospel had been their hope and the gospel had changed them, so the gospel needs to keep being their hope and needs keep changing them
4. So Paul's prayer ended with a supplication for the Colossians - May you know how to please God through the eyes of the gospel; may you be strengthened with God's power to hold onto your hope until the end, and may you be thankful for the great gift that God has given to us!

2 C. This week, we are continuing in this section, Rooted in the Gospel, moving into the second part: the glories of Christ

1. Colossians 1:15-22 is a stunning and glorious piece of prose that celebrates all that Christ is, from Creator to Savior
2. In fact, some would look at the text and see a song here - perhaps Paul was quoting or paraphrasing an early Christian hymn celebrating Christ - something loosely equivalent to our song, "Crown Him with Many Crowns"
3. But, regardless of whether it is a song or not, Paul clearly us to take our eyes and look at Christ - to fill our mind with His excellence and glory
- 1 4. And this is because he wants us to stay in the cycle that we studied last week - the cycle of gospel, hope, faith, love, and thankfulness
- 1 2 3 5. At the center of each of these is one person - Jesus Christ - Jesus is the heart of the gospel, and therefore Jesus is our hope and becomes the object of our faith and our first love and it is through Him that we offer thanksgiving back to God for what He has done
6. Jesus is at the center of this cycle, so if we want to know the gospel more, to grow deeper in hope, and faith, and love, to increase in thanksgiving to God, then we need to be looking at Jesus
- 1 7. The more we make of Jesus, the more we see Jesus' of glory, the more we magnify all of His excellencies, the more we will grow in this cycle of hope - knowing more of Jesus leads to a firmer foundation, a more sure hope
8. So this is why Paul breaks into a song about the glories of Christ after having prayed for the Colossians - he wants the Colossians to grow in hope and so they need to see more of Christ
9. And they need to keep grasping onto Christ, which is where Paul is going to conclude in verse 23 - if Jesus is all of this, then the Colossians need never to shift from this glorious foundation

D. So, let's turn and read Colossians 1:15-23

- 2 1. Feel free to follow along in your Bible, or I have the text up here on the screen

1 E. Proposition: Seeing more of Christ's glory will increase our hope and joy in the gospel, so we need to be seeing more of Christ's glory and holding tight to Him

- 1 1. The Glory of Who Christ Is (Colossians 1:15-20)
- 1 2. The Glory of What Christ Does (Colossians 1:21-22)
- 1 3. The Grasping of Those Who See Glory (Colossians 1:23)

1 II. The glory of who Christ is

As we go through verses 15-20, Paul celebrates who Christ is, and I want to consider eight statements Paul makes this morning

3 A. He is God's Regent (vs 15)

1. Verse 15 opens Paul's celebration of Christ by rooting Him in the Old Testament - He is the image of God
 - 3 a. The image of God is a concept that was introduced back in Genesis 1:26 - *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*
 - i. The image of God was His representative, the bearer of His majesty and His appointed regent with dominion over all creation - it is what our first parents were created to be and failed
 - ii. But now Christ is this - He is the image of God, the firstborn over all creation - He has inherited what our parents failed to claim, He perfectly represents the majesty and the dominion of God in this world
 - b. In fact, one way to look at the Old Testament is as the story of the search for a better image of God
 - i. There is a God-given bent in humanity that desires to worship the image of God, but this desire that was twisted, corrupted by sin, so that men made futile images of God, images fashioned after themselves and their own desires instead of representing the glory of God - and this is splashed across Old Testament
 - 2 ii. God had promised it would be futile, even dishonoring to God, for man to make images, God reserved the right to create His image for Himself, Exodus 20:4-6 - *"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments."*
 - iii. But there is a competing story of God recreating His image - He places His image on Israel and then on David and David's sons and in the glory of the temple and there is a hope that perhaps God's image will be restored and mankind will be brought to God's image again - but in the end, each of these hopes fails
 - c. But now, there is the perfect image of God restored to man - an image that fulfills the promise of God in the Old Testament, an image that was not made by human hands but sent by God Himself
 - 2 i. The glory of God has broken into this world again in Christ, and this is a favorite topic of Paul, for example, he says in II Corinthians 4:4 - *In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*
 - ii. Jesus is the representative of the glory, majesty, dominion and authority of God residing in this world and taking the rule of all things - there is inexhaustible and infinite glory wrapped up in this one small phrase
2. But why does Paul lead with this?
 - a. The Colossians seem to be being tempted to look elsewhere, to find glory and hope in things in this world
 - b. But, if Jesus is the image of God, then the Colossians don't need to look anywhere else to see glory - all glory and dominion is centered in Him and they can have their fill of glory simply by looking to Jesus

1 3 B. He is the Creator (vs 16a)

1. Paul's second statement is also rooted in the Old Testament and corrects a common misunderstanding of His first-born over creation does not refer to Jesus' being (that is not created) but position (ruler over creation)
 - a. Jesus displays to us the glory and dominion of God, and we can see that by realizing that He created us and everything else, so Paul describes two categories which are all subservient to Christ because He made them
- 1 2. First, Paul says that Jesus is the Creator of all that is visible - *by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth*
 - 1 a. Literally, Jesus was behind Genesis 1:1 - *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*
 - b. Already we can see that Jesus created us ourselves, along with everything we see in this world, everything we use in this world - all of it belongs to Jesus and ought to worship Jesus because Jesus made it all
 - c. Every atom in this universe was made by Jesus and ultimately serves Him! Why look anywhere else?
 - d. If all of creation is meant to serve Jesus, then the Colossians don't need to listen to worldly rules about how to use created things - they just need to use them to serve Jesus, He made the Colossians and everything else
- 2 3. But Paul doesn't stop there, he continues to say that Jesus is the Creator of all that is visible and invisible
 - a. Some of the philosophy that the Colossians were chasing after seemed to have a strong spiritual bent - they would worship angels and worry about spiritual powers, the rulers and authorities that operated in this world
 - b. But Paul says, 'Jesus made everything in the unseen realm, just as much as He made the physical realm'
 - c. There is no reason to fear the unseen realm, whether they be thrones, or rulers, or dominions, or authorities - Jesus is their Creator as well, ultimately they all exist to serve Him
 - d. Again, there is no reason to fear these things, to be taken in bondage to these things - instead they need to be taken captive to Christ, the one who made all of these things - these things have no power of their own
 - e. The created world is not to be served but to serve - and all of it was created - by none less than Jesus Himself!

1 3 C. He is the Purpose (vs 16b)

1. What I'm calling Paul's third statement is just three short words at the end of verse 16 - *all things were created through Him and for Him* - but these three words have intense meaning
2. Paul is not only making a statement of essence - that the world and all that is in it, visible and invisible, was created by Christ - but also a statement of purpose - why were all of these things created? Why did Jesus create them?
3. And the answer is simple - Jesus created them for Himself - He created them to reveal and to display His glory, to be a backdrop on which He could display His redemptive work
4. Everything in all of creation serves only one ultimate purpose - to be a medium in which Christ can display who He is and how glorious He is - so whenever we see the glories of creation or the sorrows of sin, we ought to see the glory of Christ behind it, it is pointing us to Him
5. But again, this means that the created world should not be taking us captive - we should not be serving it and its demands, but instead using it to serve Jesus - all of it exists for His glory and we should use it that way

1 3 D. He is the Sustainer (vs 17)

1. As Paul continues on, he says that Christ is not only the Creator and the purpose of creation, but He is the one that actively holds creation together
2. Jesus is still intimately involved with His creation - nothing exists without Him and nothing continues to exist without Him - He sovereignly holds the universe together by the word of His power and directs everything that happens to His ultimate glory
3. Nothing in this world can be ultimately attributed to any other designer and nothing happens outside of Christ's design because apart from Him nothing continues to exist

1 3 E. He is the Head (vs 18)

1. As we move into verse 18, Paul leaves the first creation and moves to a second - Jesus was the Creator of the first creation, the Purpose of the first creation and the Sustainer of the first creation - but Jesus is also the center of a new creation
2. One significant purpose of the first creation was to be a stage on which Christ could display the wisdom, power and glory of a recreation - after rebellion, reconciliation; after a fall, a restoration; after corruption, cleansing
3. And just as Christ was the firstborn and head of the first creation, so Christ is the firstborn and head of a new creation
4. So Paul celebrates that Jesus is the Head of the Church - He stands at the head of a new people of God; He is their generator, their regent and their king, they exist in and under Him
5. And Paul celebrates that He is the beginning and the firstborn from the dead - He is the firstborn of creation and also the firstborn from the dead - He stands at the supreme position as heir, regent, and essence over creation and over the church
16. So, Paul concludes by saying "*that in everything He might be preeminent*" - Christ is supreme in everything, there is no glory that does not belong to Christ - He outshines all other glories
7. And there is nothing that we could fix our eyes on, nothing that we could take joy in, nothing that we could rest our hope in that would be greater than Christ - so we should be fixing our eyes on Jesus, to see Him in His glory
8. If our eyes are fixed on Christ then we will see ultimate glory but if our eyes are fixed on something else then we will miss that glory, our eyes will be filled with some cheap counterfeit and the gospel will seem very small to us
9. In everything (in everything!) He is preeminent!

1 3 F. He is God incarnate (vs 19)

1. Paul starts verse 19 with a 'why' word, 'for' - as he continues on, he is going to tell us why Jesus can be preeminent in everything, why is all glory wrapped up in Jesus?
2. And Paul says that it is simple - He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, the creator of all things, the sustainer of all things, the purpose, the head, and every other title that could possibly be imagined because He is the dwelling place of all the fullness of God
3. Here we tread on something that we cannot fully explain or understand, except to say that Jesus the man was also God Himself in human flesh - in Him all of God's fullness dwelt
4. There is no aspect of God that does not find its perfect reflection in His Son; there is no wisdom of God that does not find its zenith in Jesus; there is none of God's glory that does not radiate out from Christ
5. We have no need to look anywhere else because Jesus is God incarnate, all the fullness of God, down to the last drop, is found in Him and we can drink our fill by holding onto Jesus - but Paul isn't done yet

1 3 G. He is the Savior (vs 20)

1. In verse 20, Paul continues His reason for the preeminence of Christ - first, Christ is preeminent because He is the incarnate God, but He is also preeminent because He is the action of God
2. The fullness of God is in Christ and the fullness of God has acted in Christ, God's fullness has acted in Christ to reconcile all things to Himself and to make peace through the shed blood of Jesus
- 1 3. Jesus is the fullness of God's action in this world - God does not do anything in this world outside of His Son because His purpose in all things, as Paul will say in Ephesians 1:9-10 - *He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.*
4. All of God's actions in this world have been in and through Christ because God's purpose was to bring everything into the kingdom of His Beloved Son
5. So Christ is preeminent because God dwells in Him and because through Him God has acted to save, and not save a little bit but to reconcile all of the cosmos back to Himself and to bring *Pax Christus*, the peace of Christ, over everything
6. Paul wants us to look at Christ and say, "He is glorious! I could spend a lifetime diving into the depths of these glories and more than a lifetime - I could spend eternity raptured in infinite joy probing the depths of who Christ is."
7. But before we leave this section, I think there's one more thing we need to see:

2 H. He is Wisdom incarnate

1. Paul is choosing his statements here very carefully - not because there is any way we could exhaust the glories of Christ, but because he wants to display specific parts of it for the Colossians to see
 - a. So, on the one hand, he displays Christ as the center of all glory from the beginning to the end, from creation to recreation
 - b. But there's another dimension to the phrases Paul has chosen - many, if not all, of these phrases have their roots in the concept of wisdom
 - c. Paul is borrowing ideas from both Jewish and Greek wisdom and saying that Christ is the ultimate expression of wisdom, each of these phrases call us to see Christ as wisdom incarnate
 - 1 d. Paul is starting to build up toward his statement in Colossians 2:3 - *in [Him] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* - He's showing us that now so that he can affirm it later, we ought to be seeing that all of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are truly hidden in Christ
 - e. Here's how one writer put it: *The hymn is constructed in two sections. The first, verses 15-18a, deal with Christ's pre-existent role in creation, and the second section, verses 18b-20 deal with his role in redemption. Another way of expressing the themes of the two sections would be to say that the movement of the poem is from his role in the old creation to his role in the new creation. We do not know who the writer of the poem was. It is possible it was Paul, but unlikely. Probably the writer was an unknown Jewish Christian, who took various qualities of Sophia and applied them to Christ in his relation to the cosmos. In its original form the hymn probably envisaged a disruption in cosmic harmony, and saw Christ as the divine agent in creation but now also the divine agent in reconciliation, restoring harmony to the cosmos.*
- 2 2. So Paul shows us that Jesus is the revelation of God's wisdom
 - a. When Paul says that Jesus is the image of the invisible God that statement is rooted in the Old Testament as we have already seen, but not only in the story of creation and the law
 - b. The image of God was bound up with wisdom - wisdom was the essence of the revelation of God, God has acted in wisdom and we look at His actions and see wisdom
 - 1 c. This phrase, *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation*, has roots in Proverbs 8, which we read earlier, particularly Proverbs 8:22-23 - *"The LORD possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.*
 - d. Wisdom was the firstborn of God, the first of His works before ever creation was, and Christ is the embodiment of that image - He embodies and displays to us the wisdom of God
- 2 3. And Paul shows us that Jesus is God's creative wisdom
 - a. Creation and wisdom were bound up throughout the Old Testament, creation was the expression of God's wisdom and God created wisely bringing pattern and order to the universe so that everything was very good
 - b. And we can get glimpses of God's wisdom through examining creation, we can see God's creative wisdom
 - 1 c. In fact, this is where Proverbs 8 goes next, in Proverbs 8:27-30 - *When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master workman,*
 - d. So it is not surprising that Paul immediately jumps into Christ being the creator - if Christ is the image of God, the embodiment of His wisdom, then Christ is the creator, the workman with God in creation

- 24. And then Paul shows us that Jesus is God's reconciling wisdom
 - a. One major divide between the Old Testament and the New Testament is their roots in the Old Creation and the New Creation - there is a new wisdom from God displayed in the New Testament that brings order to that which had dissolved into chaos and futility - an act of wisdom that is greater, if that were possible, than the first
 - b. And as God's first act of wisdom had acted in Christ, so God's second act of wisdom acts in Christ - Christ is the reconciler and savior of the world, the head of the new body and the firstborn from the dead, emerging from the futility of death into the life of wisdom
 - 1 c. So Christ displays this recreative wisdom of God as well, Ephesians 3:10-11 - *His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- 5. So, when Paul says at the heart of this section that all the fullness of God dwells in Him, He is saying that all wisdom dwells in Christ - all of the wisdom that God possesses is found in Christ
 - a. And this word fullness is a good picture because it might call us to think of another place that was filled with God's presence and glory - God's presence filled the Temple
 - b. And, although we don't always think about this, the Temple was the pinnacle of wisdom in Israel - it was where God's wisdom dwelt, where God displayed His wisdom and so it was with Wisdom that it was made by Solomon the wise builder as Bezalel and Oholiab had the Tabernacle before Him
 - 1 c. And now Christ is that - He is the receptacle in which all the glory of God dwells, the heart of wisdom for the entire cosmos, so Paul can say in a few verses - *in [Him] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*

1 III. The glory of what Christ does

A. As Paul starts his next section, he is going to move from the abstract contemplation of Christ's glory, if any of these things can really be called abstract... but he wants to move from the abstract to the personal

- 1. He doesn't want the Colossians only to see that Jesus is all glorious, but more importantly, this infinitely glorious being has taken hold of them - He who is infinitely glorious has done glorious things for them!
- 2. So Paul now directs their attention to three things: he wants them to remember where Christ found them; he wants them to remember what Christ did for them; and he wants them to remember where Christ is taking them
- 3. And in seeing these things, in knowing these glorious truths, they will see the glory of Christ in a much deeper and much greater way - they will know Him not only as the glorious One but as their glorious One, the glory of God that came and captured them - not an abstract glory but an infinitely personal glory

1 2 B. Where Christ found them: alienated and hostile in mind

- 1. Verse 21 describes where Christ found them - *and you who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds*
- 2. Paul says three important things about them - God hated you and you hated God because you were full of evil
- 1 3. Paul says they were alienated - actually our current political climate (not that I'm endorsing the current political attitude) helps us understand this word well, alien, someone who doesn't belong, who should be kicked out
 - a. This is a big discussion in our country these days and in some circles there is significant animosity, anger at those who don't belong and a desire to cast them out, to get rid of them - they don't belong here and need to be removed (now I'm not saying this is necessarily good for our country, but it is illustrative)
 - b. Now, if we multiply those most intense feelings by millions, or billions even infinitely that's how God felt toward us - we were alienated, illegal aliens, those who had no right to be in His kingdom and must be cast out
 - c. God hated us because we were everything that was opposed to Him; we were full of evil and every corruption and we would stain and sully His perfect kingdom - He must hunt us down and throw us out
- 1 4. And the feeling was mutual, not only were we alienated, but also hostile in mind, we hated God right back
 - a. We despised His goodness and disregarded His rule, we loved our foolishness and hated God's wisdom
 - b. We willingly exchanged the glory of the immortal God for corruption and we rejoiced in it, thinking that we had done well - God rightly hated us because we actively hated Him
- 1 5. And the reason for the mutual hatred was sin - we were doing evil deeds, deeds that were antithetical to who God is
 - a. We decided to throw off God's rule and dethrone Him as king, so we pursued our own desires and ignored God's law, we decided to pursue our own foolishness and despise God's wisdom
 - b. And our foolish rejection led to this intense enmity - we foolishly hated God for declaring His sovereignty over us and God rightly hated us for rebelling against Him - this is the state in which Christ found us
- 6. And this is crucial to remember because this is the tapestry upon which Christ will display His glory
 - a. If we don't understand who we are, we can't see the glory of Christ - until we see and feel and know how evil we were, how far away from God we were our eyes will be filled with our own glory and the glories of this world
 - b. But when we see who we were, then we are ready to turn our eyes from ourselves and behold something greater - knowing the depth of our sinful state readies us to look at Christ and behold Him as glorious

1 3 C. What Christ did for them: reconciliation through death

1. In the first part of verse 22, Christ enters the picture again and Paul tells us what Christ has done for us
 - 1 a. He has reconciled us - it's a very simple phrase but when contrasted against the background that we've just considered, a phrase that is beyond amazing
 - b. He reconciled us - He took this relationship of mutual hatred between God and us built on our sin and resolved the hatred, He undid the enmity, He brought us back to God as members of the kingdom no longer alienated
 - c. Jesus took the alien and made Him a full member of the kingdom, and that's incredible - it is beyond anything that we could have imagined
 - d. Jesus took our relationship with God and made God no longer hate us and us no longer hate God, so that what Paul said in verse 13 can be realized - He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,
- 1 2. And He did this in a specific way - He did it by taking flesh and dying
 - a. To understand how glorious this is, we really need to feel the reality of the depth of hatred that existed between God and us and to understand the depth of sin that fueled that hatred
 - b. We need to be able to look at ourselves and say, "we need to die, I need to die, that is the only right answer here - I am so despicable that the entire universe should call out for my death and God will never be satisfied until He has pursued me to destruction."
 - c. Christ saw that and He said to His Father, "I'll get that done." But instead of pursuing us to death, He brought death to us - He offered Himself in our place, He took our flesh and died and took our sin, our enmity, to death
 - d. He did what had to be done so that we can realize death in Him, we can die in Him because He took on flesh and died, and that death ended the battle, it ended the enmity, it brought peace and reconciliation to all who find death in Jesus, to all who see their need to die and desire to find themselves dead in the cross of Christ
3. So Christ's wisdom has undone the disharmony of the cosmos and reestablished beauty and harmony in the universe
 - a. And we are the recipients of that - we were the disharmony and chaos that was tearing apart the fabric of creation, but Christ came and absorb our foolishness in Himself so that we could be reconciled to God
 - b. There are no words in all the world to describe the glories of this truth - this glory ought to consume us and overwhelm us and cause us to desire to know this glory more to see more and more of this glorious savior for all eternity - look at what He has done for us
 - c. But, we aren't done yet, there is still more to come because Christ isn't finished with us

1 3 D. Where Christ is taking them: holy and blameless and above reproach

1. Continuing on, Paul now looks forward - *in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,*
2. Paul looks back to where we were, he looks back at what Christ did and now he is looking forward to what Christ is going to do - He is going to present us blameless before His throne
3. Not only has Christ destroyed the enmity that has divided us from God, He is destroying the basis of that enmity, sin, so that at that final day He will place us before His throne in full view of the universe and the universe will agree that we are above reproach, holy and blameless
- 2 4. Jude will say the same thing in the close of His letter, which are some of my favorite verses in the Bible as well, Jude 24-25 - *Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.*
5. So, in this little phrase, in Colossians and Jude, there are two promises - the promise of sanctification, that we will be made blameless, and the promise of glorification, that we will be presented before Him
6. Both of these things have been won for us by Christ and both of these things will be done for us by Christ - our fight against sin in this life will be won by Christ and we will persevere to the end and be presented before His throne by Christ - He has done all of this for us
- 1 7. In the work of Christ there is perfect assurance - He has accomplished what is necessary and He will accomplish what is necessary, as Paul will say in Romans 8:32 - *He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*
8. If Christ died to reconcile us to God, is there any doubt that He will continue until His work is finished, until the last stain of sin has been wiped away and we have been presented before His throne?
9. So, in verse 15-20 we see Christ as the center of the universe from the beginning to the end, from creation to recreation and in verses 21-22 we see Christ as the center of our salvation from beginning to end, from justification through sanctification to glorification - all has been accomplished for us by Christ
10. And, again, our response should be, "Wow! Who could ever imagine such glorious grace and who could ever imagine such a glorious savior?"
11. Christ has taken you from hating and being hated by God, cast out and under His curse, to a promise of being presented before His presence as perfect, worthy to be an heir of the kingdom - He is glorious beyond words!

1 IV. The grasping of those who see glory

1 A. As we close this morning, I'll finish by looking at verse 23

1. Paul, having sung a song of Christ's glory, now finishes with a punch - here's what you need to do with this!
2. At the risk of sounding blasphemous, as if there was something to which Christ's glory was subservient, I would say this charge is what Paul has been pushing toward through this entire passage
3. Paul has been filling our minds with the glories of Christ, who He is and what He has done, so that when he lands this charge it will come full-force, it pierce us to the heart and cause us to say, "Yes, I need to do that"
4. And I say this, because here in verse 23, Paul returns to the theme that flows through his whole book, hope - the result of reciting the glories of Christ will be that we will not shift from the hope of the gospel
5. We will be, as I've titled this section, rooted in the gospel and the more of the glories of Christ that we see, the deeper our root will be, the more firmly we'll be attached to this foundation
6. So what is Paul wanting us to do? Why has he brought us to see Christ? It's simple, when you see glory - hold on!

1 B. Paul is saying that there is only one response to this awe-inspiring display of glory: holding fast to this hope

1. Holding fast to our hope is a strong theme of Colossians - let's just review where we've been
 - 2 a. Paul celebrated that hope had brought the Colossians to faith in the gospel in verses 3-5 - *We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.*
 - 2 b. And then Paul had prayed that the Colossians would be strengthened by God to continue in that hope forever in verse 11 - *May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy,*
 - 2 c. And now Paul is charging them to hold on to this hope in verse 23 - *if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard,*
 - d. This is Paul's goal - he's displaying the foundation of the gospel, the foundation of our hope so that the Colossians can grasp on and hold onto this hope which produces faith in them
2. So Paul says that they need to continue in the faith being stable and steadfast
 - a. Their foundation needs to be Christ and they need to be firmly grounded in that foundation - they can't be knocked about by the passions and hardships of this world, they can't start to trust in other things beside Christ, they can't start to look for salvation from other sources
 - b. And this will happen when they don't shift from the hope that they have heard in the gospel, the hope that is displayed in this marvelous recitation of the glories of Christ - they need to want the things that the gospel promises, not the things that the world promises; they need to want to see the glories of Christ and not have their eyes clouded by lesser things
 - c. And this is what Paul is trying to do with His recitation of Christ's glories - he is trying to whet the Colossians appetite; he's trying to get them to say, "Yes, these things are really good; these things are worth leaving all of the hopes of the world behind for!"
3. And this is the application of our passage this morning - we need to grasp on to this glory
 - a. I know all too well how easy it is to get distracted by the things of the world, to be pulled here and there by this problem or that solution or this task and to lose sight of our real hope in seeing the glory of Christ
 - b. But we need to make earnest effort to place Christ in front of our eyes - to fill our minds with the glories that we hear of in this passage, to make this their joy that gets us out of bed, the hope that calls us to our daily tasks, and the assurance that allows us to lay down and sleep every night
 - c. We need to cultivate an excitement and eager expectation in hearing and meditating on the glories of Christ!
 - d. So fill your mind with these glories - even do practical things to help you fill your mind with such glories, one thing you could do is simply memorize this passage, I highly recommend it, so that you can recite its glories all day long, so that it continues to whet your appetite for Christ at all times
4. Those who have truly seen this glory, the glory of Christ, will always grasp onto it and cling to it without letting go
 - a. And they will keep clinging to it more and more the more they know about it, letting all other hopes and glories and joys fall through their fingers because these glories are so great
 - b. That is the essence of the Christian life, and my question to you this morning is, does that describe you?
 - c. Is joy in the glory of Christ your sole motivation in life, does it overwhelm you and control you, does it call you to know more and to worship more and to rest more and to run more in Christ?
 - d. None of us do this enough, so all of us need to go out and be grasping onto His glory - make His glory your hope, make His glory your joy, make His glory your pursuit and your desires, the object of your affections and your thoughts, be consumed in His glory this week
 - e. And the more you see of His glory, the more you will be consumed - just keep looking at Him!

1 C. So that is our application this morning, but we need to finish by acknowledging the solemnity of this passage

- 1** 1. Paul doesn't just invite us to pursue hope and faith in Christ, he calls us to see that this grasping is a conditional requirement, he says, "if you continue in the faith"
 - a. Continuing steadfastly in the faith, not shifting from the hope of the gospel is a requirement of being presented before Jesus holy and blameless and above reproach
 - b. If you continue holding onto your hope in Jesus, then you will persevere to the end and find the reward that you have been waiting for as you are presented before Jesus
 - c. But, if you do not keep holding onto your hope, if you allow the wisdom of this world to call you to rest your hope on other things, then you will not be presented before Jesus in glory and splendor
 - d. It is a small word, 'if', but infinitely important - if your hope isn't set on Christ, if your soul is set on some other hope and your eyes are filled with some other splendor, then these glorious truths have nothing to do with you
2. So this is a joyous invitation but also a solemn charge - keep holding onto this hope
 - a. It is an invitation to partake of pure, unadulterated joy as you behold, now and for all eternity, the beauties of the Son of God, the savior of the world
 - b. But it is also a solemn charge - be beholding the glories of Christ, keep your hope there, because otherwise you will fail to partake of this glorious joy
 - c. So, run after Christ with joy, but if you are holding onto something else, be terrified - it should be a terror to us to hold some other hope, to rest some of our anticipation in something other than Christ, because that hope could become the thing that turns us away from Christ and cause us to fail to persevere to glory
 - d. Be solemnly evaluating your life - do I have another hope, or is my faith stable and steadfast, holding onto the hope of the gospel revealed to me in the glories of Christ?

D. But I want to finish with a note of hope

1. This is a very solemn statement, one that should cause us to tremble, to, as Paul would say to the Philippians, to work out our salvation with fear and trembling - if we fail to keep our hope in Christ, we may not reach the end and glory, we may stumble and fall
2. But, Paul has already pointed us to what will keep us from putting our hope in other things, and it is two combined truths:
 - a. First, if you are truly beholding the glories of Christ, then there is no reason that you should be drawn away to other things because Christ is so much more glorious - so just keep beholding and keep loving Christ
 - b. But, second, Paul prayed, as we looked at last week, he prayed that the Colossians would be strengthened with God's power to endure until the end, to keep holding onto their hope until the end
3. And that's the hope that I want to leave you with this morning - our endurance in hope is a hope that God will keep us enduring, a hope that the power of God will keep us in the hope of the Gospel forever
 - a. If we were left on our own, we would wander, that is our nature, but Christ knows those who are His and will not allow them to stray
 - b. So this is a warning, it is a conditional - you may need to look at your life and make sure you haven't deceived yourself about your hope - but it is not a reason to be frightened
- 2** c. Even when Paul tells the Philippians that they should be working out salvation with fear and trembling, he ends with this, Philippians 2:12-13 - *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*
- d. Our fear and trembling should be an earnest plea to God that He would keep working in us - it is God who must keep us holding onto hope in Christ and He will, if your hope is truly in Christ, God will keep your hope there
- 1** e. Because it is ultimately God who shines the light of the glory of Christ into our hearts, as Paul tells the Corinthians in II Corinthians 4:6 - *For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*
- f. Our hope in endurance is a hope that God will keep us enduring until the end, we grasp onto the glories of Christ with confidence that God will keep us grasping onto the glories of Christ forever
4. So behold the glories of Christ, set your hope in them completely and rejoice, and continue in prayer - Father, may I be strengthened with power according to your glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy!
 - a. Father, let me see the glories of Christ, and let me never turn away and hope in something less!