



CONNECT GROUP NOTES

Sunday 30.04.2023

“He Reigns Above it All”

Preacher

Nathan Bean

Scripture

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,
2 To God’s holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ:
Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray
for you, 4 because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love
you have for all God’s people— 5 the faith and love that spring from the
hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard
in the true message of the gospel 6 that has come to you. In the same way,
the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just
as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly
understood God’s grace. 7 You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow
servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our[d] behalf, 8 and who also
told us of your love in the Spirit.

9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped
praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his
will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, 10 so
that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way:
bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, 11 being
strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you
may have great endurance and patience, 12 and giving joyful thanks to the
Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people



in the kingdom of light. 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

Colossians 1:1-14

Thought

Paul was writing to the Colossian Church who were being influenced by an increasing culture of gnosticism. The term ‘Gnostic’ literally means ‘Secret Knowledge’, and the gnostics would claim that just having Jesus wasn't enough. You needed more - a deeper understanding, a secret knowledge that brought with it power and exclusive understanding.

Gnostics believed that the human spirit was good, but the body was bad. So as long as your spirit and heart was good, what you did to others' bodies didn't matter. This school of thought was problematic, as it resulted in people treating others poorly. But the bible reminds us to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice as this is our spiritual act of worship. Paul, in the letter to the Colossian Church, also reminds us to love others - spirit and body.

We are called to use our whole selves (spirit and body) as an act of worship to uplift and bless those around us. It's never a spiritual experience only.

The Gnostic influence was alive in the Colossian Church, but modern day Gnosticism still infiltrates the Church. We go after the spiritual - chasing one spiritual high after another, but we must realise that spiritual fruit isn't for personal consumption, it's for others.

Finally, Paul's opening greeting is a reminder of what the heart of the true gospel looks like - “grace and peace”. Maybe faith has become overly complicated for us, but when it's stripped back to its core, it can be summarised by these two words. *Everything* we receive from God is an act of grace. And when we receive this grace, we find peace. A peace which doesn't reside in the absence of conflict, but a peace that is found in the presence of God in the midst of our journey.

Maybe this is an opportunity to bring our faith back to basics. To step away from the gnostic temptation to make it more complex than it needs to be,



and to know God's grace and peace in all of life's moments. To lay down striving, to understand His beautiful undeserved grace, and experience His presence which brings true and lasting peace.

Discussion Points

1. What do you think it might practically mean to use both our spirits and bodies to be a blessing to those around us?
2. Do you think our faith has become more complex than it needs to be? If so, what do you think you can do to bring it back to the grace and peace of Christ Jesus?
3. What might it look like to represent a simple gospel of grace and peace to the world around us?

Personal application + Prayer

Lord Jesus,

Thank you that You are enough - that no knowledge, no secret power, no formula or way of living can ever match the simple beauty of the grace You have poured out in my life, and the peace that comes from Your presence walking with me through the good times and hard times. Help me to truly understand who You are, and to live a life devoted to You and those around me.

Amen