

“The Lifetime Plus Guarantee”

Colossians 1:15-23

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Series: Book of Colossians [#3]

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Theme: **Christ’s Total Superiority Guarantees Your Position With God.**

Introduction.

Guarantees. We see and hear a host of extreme and sometimes bizarre sale promotions. And how can you have a slick, effective promotion without a *guarantee*? There even are *Lifetime Guarantees*. Of course some lifetime guarantees may not actually be what you or I think they are and should be. As an old, wise saying reminds us, “The big print giveth and the small print taketh away.”

One entrepreneur, it seems, decided to have a bit of fun in stating the guarantee for his products. He writes:

We at Acme Klein Bottle strive to create the finest nonorientable surfaces and hope that you will be satisfied with your new Acme manifold. For this reason, we are pleased to offer this UNCONDITIONAL GUARANTEE complete with these conditions:

- We unconditionally guarantee your Acme Klein Bottle to be free of any defects in workmanship or workwomanship for a period of ONE YEAR following purchase. If you aren’t satisfied with your Acme Klein Bottle—for any reason— just return it for a refund or replacement. You pick up shipping charges.
- We guarantee safe arrival. If your Klein Bottle arrives broken, call or send email and we will immediately send a replacement.
- We slightly guarantee your Klein Bottle for THREE MONTHS against any cracks or breakage, whether due to earthquakes, clumsy undergrads, or greasy fingers. Just mail us a fragment and \$10, and we will send a replacement.
- We warrant each Acme Klein Bottle for a period of FIVE YEARS to be absolutely free of any magnetic monopoles. If you discover one, contact us immediately and we will refund your purchase price right after claiming the Nobel prize.
- Furthermore, we guarantee for TEN YEARS that any polyhedron spanning your unbroken Acme Klein Bottle will have about as many edges as the sum of its vertices plus faces.
- We further warrant for ONE MILLION YEARS that within a Euclidean plane, the square of a right triangle’s hypotenuse will equal the sum of the squares of the two remaining legs.

In addition, Acme’s provides this exclusive LIFETIME GUARANTEE: We guarantee that you will live your entire lifetime, or double your money back.

In a more serious vein, the first century believers at Colossae heard claims that Jesus Christ and the Christian faith were not exactly or fully like they had been taught, just as we hear. Some people raised questions about the nature of Jesus, while others were adding new or different insights and experiences that did not square with what they were taught. What were they, what are we to believe? What is our *guarantee* that Jesus Christ Himself is sufficient? Paul's theme throughout the book of Colossians is *the sufficiency and supremacy of Christ*. Here, very early in the letter, he answers the challenges head on with the positive truth of "*The Lifetime Plus Guarantee*," that *Christ's total superiority guarantees your position with God*. We begin with ...

Christ's Total Superiority.

Paul presents Christ's total superiority through three relationships. First, it is seen in His relationship to God the Father. Go to verse 15. "He is the image of the invisible God." *Image*. This word was used, for example, of the picture or image of the emperor on a coin, where great effort was spent to accurately portray him—or at least accurately in the way he wanted to be portrayed.

Jesus is the exact likeness of God the Father.

- John 1:18. "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God [i.e. Christ, God the Son], who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him."
- Later in John's gospel Philip said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus answered, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father?'" (14:8, 9)
- Again, the opening verses of the book of Hebrews speak of Jesus, telling us, "He is the radiance of His [God the Father's] glory and the exact representation of His nature." (1:3)

We come back to Colossians.

- In today's section, 1:19, "For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him [Christ]."
- Move ahead to chapter 2 verse 9, "For in [Christ] all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form."

Jesus Christ, eternal God the Son, the eternal Word, *is* the Word made flesh. He *is* the *exact* image of the invisible God.

To those who said, "You have to become Jewish and follow the ceremonial law and traditions to truly be, or at least fully be a believer," and to others who said, "You need a special experience or knowledge which only we can give you," Paul answers, "No! Christ is totally superior to that—He is God! He is the Sovereign of the universe! He is and shows us all we need to know and have!"

Secondly, Christ's total superiority is seen in His relationship to creation. Jesus Christ is not a created being. He is the Creator. Verses 15-16

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.”

Let's start with the phrase “the firstborn of all creation.” To our ears this may sound like Paul is saying Jesus Christ was the first of God's creations. In fact, some false cults jump on this phrase saying, “See! He is a created being, not eternal God.” The apostle Peter, in his second letter, chapter 3, described such people and groups as “the untaught and unstable” who distort things that are hard to understand “to their own destruction.” (3:16)

The word *firstborn* has two meanings. One is “the first to be born.” Secondly, position, power or preeminence over, as firstborn sons had over their brothers So it was frequently used to express being first in position, power and authority; being exalted or superior to and over. Turn back to Exodus 4. After God called Moses to lead Israel out of slavery in Egypt, He told him to go to the Pharaoh and tell him to let the people go, saying (verse 22) “Israel is My son, My *firstborn*.” Now Israel was far from the first nation God brought into being. It was, however, His *chosen* nation to whom He gave a special, exalted position above all the other nations.

Then turn over to Psalm 89. The Psalmist speaks of King David, and also of the One who would come through him, the Christ. In verse 27 God says of Him, “I also shall make him My *firstborn*, the highest of the kings of the earth.”

The same word we have here in Colossians 1:15 is used with the same meaning in Hebrews 1:6, as the writer speaks of the time when God the Father “again brings the *firstborn* into the world,” and says, “Let all the angels of God worship Him.” Paul is telling us here that Jesus Christ has the rights and power over creation. Verse 16 develops and explains this— He has this power and position because He is the Creator of all. This displays His total superiority over all things —all people and authorities of this world, all the spiritual beings and powers.

And there is more. Christ is not only the *Creator*, but He also is the *Sustainer* of all. Look at verse 17. “He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.” Our entire universe, all of creation, would come to an immediate, chaotic, cataclysmic conclusion if Christ were not sustaining it, holding it together. Yes, He does some of that through what we describe in scientific laws and principles. But this statement says much more than that. Christ is personally, directly, actively involved in holding His creation together.

Some people would give almost anything to have power and superiority. But if even they you gain it, it is fickle. It can be very temporary. You may recall General Norman Schwarzkopf, who became well known as the commander of the first Iraqi war. Some years after the war he described his retirement this way, “[Once] I could give a single command and

541,000 people would immediately obey it. Today I can't get a plumber to come to my house." Not so with Christ. He always has been, is, and always will be over and holding together all He has created.

Then, Paul tells us, Christ's total superiority is seen in His relationship to the church. Go on to verse 18.

"He [Christ] is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything."

Christ is the head of the church. The word "head" was used metaphorically to indicate the one who was in charge, the one who governed, the one who had a superior rank. Paul used it of the church in Ephesians 4:15 where he wrote that "speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the *head*, even Christ."

Later here in Colossians he gives us a few more details of what Christ being our head means, as in 2:19 he speaks of those who are

"not holding fast to the *head*, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God."

Christ is our Lord and also the source of all true spiritual vitality and growth as His people share, encourage, support and work with each other.

The word *firstborn* appears again here—He is the "*firstborn* from [out of] the dead." Here the word carries both meanings. Christ is the first to rise from the dead with an everlasting body. And, He is the One in authority, the One who has authority over death, over the resurrection, over resurrected ones.

Paul tells us, remember who Jesus Christ is.

- He is God the Son, equal with God the Father.
- He is the Creator and Sustainer of all.
- He is the head and builder of His church.

What does Jesus' total superiority mean to us as believers? It provides "*The Lifetime Plus Guarantee*," *Christ's total superiority guarantees your position with God*. And so now we need to look at...

Your Certain Position In Christ.

God is perfect, holy; we are not. We are imperfect and sinful. Because we are imperfect and sinful by nature, we cannot become perfect and holy no matter how sincere and arduous our efforts may be. We need a *bridge*—a bridge to *redeem* us from our sinful, hopeless and helpless condition to forgiveness, acceptance and life with God. Jesus Christ

is that bridge, and our position with God is certain if we cross the bridge of Christ to Him.

Paul gives us a summary of that here. First, as believers, our position with God is certain because Christ has provided objective reconciliation for all. Drop down to verse 19.

“For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him *to reconcile all things to Himself*, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.” (19-20)

To reconcile is to change and move from discord to harmony. Paul uses an intensive form of the word here to emphasize the completeness of this reconciliation, “to reconcile fully.” Turn back to 2 Corinthians 5 where we find the same idea. Beginning at verse 17,

“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who *reconciled* us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ *reconciling the world to Himself*, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” (17-19)

Christ has provided *objective reconciliation*—it is accomplished, actual and available; it is sufficient for me and all my sins, for you and all your sins, for everyone and all their sins. Jesus said, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whoever* believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). John wrote at the end of the book of the Revelation, “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost” (Revelation 22:17).

Building on this objective reconciliation, Christ has provided personal reconciliation for all who believe. Let’s pick it up at verse 21,

“... although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death...” (21-22a)

The *gospel*, the good news of Jesus Christ, as Paul wrote in Romans chapter 1 “is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” (1:16). Even though our thoughts and actions were self-centered acts of rebellion against God, His truth, His holiness, His Lordship, God reconciled us to Himself when we placed our faith in Jesus Christ.

Yes, God has chosen us in Christ before time, but from our perspective, from what we can see, our critical point is the point of believing. As it has been said, “decision determines destiny.”

Our position with God is certain because we were reconciled fully and forever in Christ who is equal with God the Father, who is the Creator and Sustainer of all that exists, and is the head and builder of His church. Some may say, “That’s great for now, for today, for

this life. But, how can I know God will really accept me into heaven to be with Him when I die? Paul speaks to this here as well.

Your position in Christ is certain because He has provided final glorification for all who believe. Go to verse 22 again. “He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, *in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.*” The ultimate purpose of our reconciliation is to present us to God *in heaven*. In other words, God saved you in order to accept you into heaven. Or, from a different perspective, God would not have saved you if He were not going to bring you into His presence in heaven.

There and then you will be holy, blameless, and beyond reproach. As Paul wrote in Ephesians 5, Christ is going to “present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.” (27)

This is part of *your* reconciliation, *your* salvation, in Jesus. He has provided it for you. He will bring it about. And so Paul could write in Philippians 1:6, “I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”

“But,” you may say, “What about the next verse?” Verse 23, “if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.”

There are four basic kinds of “if” statements in the language of the New Testament. Each was structured so people knew the intent, whether the statement was spoken or written. The condition used here assumes the reality of the statement. Let’s look at another example, Galatians 5:18, “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.” The same kind of “if” or condition as Colossians 1:23.

Paul’s thought, which his readers clearly understood, was “But if you are led by the Spirit, and you are, you are not under the Law.” It could be translated, “*Since you* are led by the Spirit, and you are, you are not under the Law.”

Paul’s thought here in Colossians 1:23 is “if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard—*and you are...*” Now, that is okay, but what’s the point? There is a real danger here. Some people there and then, as well as here and now, have made statements of faith, may be active in a church, but have never actually entered “the faith.” They have not truly believed the truth of the gospel and/or, they have not truly made the decision to place their faith in Jesus Christ.

Having said all of this, don’t lose sight of the main point: your position with God is certain because Christ has provided final glorification for all who believe, for *you*.

Conclusion.

This is “The Lifetime Plus Guarantee” — *Christ’s total superiority guarantees your position with God*. In a world of slick commercials, short-lived and empty guarantees, the Creator of all that is gives you and me His word, His promise.

How do we respond to this? How do *you* respond to this? Make sure you not only know that Christ has provided reconciliation for you, but that you have received it. If you have questions, we will be glad to talk with you.

As one who has been reconciled, made *complete in Christ*, thank Him now for what He has done, is doing, and will do for you, that He has guaranteed your position with God. Praise Jesus, your Redeemer, with all that you are, in all of the moments, days, weeks and years He gives you until you meet Him face to face.

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