

Supremacy Of Christ

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[0 : 00] I just want to spend a little time this evening looking back at Colossians chapter 1, which a part of that chapter which focuses on the supremacy of Jesus Christ.

And I think that is obviously a good theme when we are considering the Lord's Supper and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

But I think it is just a good theme anyway, to think about the Lord Jesus Christ and to channel our thoughts towards him for a few moments this evening again.

It is very easy for us to lose sight of Jesus in our lives, very easy for us to become complacent and dulled by the person of Jesus Christ.

It is easy for us to take him for granted. It is easy for us to think he is not really important. It is easy for us to think he is kind of old hat.

[1 : 03] To lessen him in our lives and in the priorities of our lives, to expect something different from him, maybe than what we feel that we are receiving.

We may be fed up with our Christian lives. We may be fed up with our church, which is not necessarily the same thing. We may be fed up with other Christians, but most of all we just simply might be fed up with Jesus Christ.

We are struggling with loving other things more than Jesus. We are struggling with other things being higher in our priorities. And we are struggling and can be struggling just with the sheer ordinariness of our faith, or what we feel is the ordinariness of our faith and the dullness of our Savior.

Can I spend a little time just focusing on what Paul says here by the power of the Holy Spirit about who Christ is and the kind of Savior that we have, particularly in these verses from 15 to 20.

That is a great declaration of who Jesus is. It describes him at the beginning of this section, and later on in this section it repeats it in a different way, as the firstborn.

[2 : 38] Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. And then it goes on to say in verse 18, he is the head of the body, the church, the beginning, and the firstborn from among the dead.

So we have two slightly different angles using this terminology of Jesus Christ, repeating a truth about Jesus Christ.

And we always find, don't we, within Scripture when things are being repeated, that they generally are important, and they are being repeated for emphasis.

We wonder, and many commentators wonder whether this section is an early confessional statement of the church, that the church memorised this.

It was a theological statement. It was like a much shorter version of our Westminster confession of faith, much shorter, that it had the elements of very important truth about who Jesus was.

[3 : 39] And it is given to us through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit for us to take note of for ourselves. And it is good for us to allow the truth, again, to influence our understanding and also to a greater or lesser degree, our feelings about Jesus Christ.

So let the truth speak, and let this truth, in its own way, again be, or let us be, around the truth, expectant for what it is telling us.

The Colossian church, or maybe, how could I say it, they are just past that time when everything is fresh and new to them spiritually.

They have been around for a little while, and it may be that their initial zest and zeal for Jesus Christ has kind of faded, and the ordinariness of life has kicked in for them.

And you know, so much of that early New Testament teaching seemed to point towards a swift return of Jesus, and it may have been that they felt, well, it doesn't look like Jesus is coming back,

and they may have just been struggling a little bit with life and with their Christianity and with the opposition that they were facing in their Christianity and with some of the struggles that they were facing.

[5 : 14] And so here we have Paul, as he speaks to this church, he is giving thanks to them, but then he is resurfacing Jesus into their consciousness and into their lives.

I don't know if any of you have really mentioned this a couple of times already in the last few weeks watched Frozen Planet. There is tremendous documentary that is dealing with the Arctic and the Antarctic and all the amazing imagery and photography and commentary that goes with it.

There are these great pictures, you know, sometimes when massive, mile-long icebergs kind of break off and just descend into the water and then all of a sudden they just emerge again and float on the surface.

And there is this great sort of massive washback of water as this iceberg emerges onto the top and it is as if here Jesus is being re-engaged onto the surface of the thinking of the people in Colossae and a reminder has been given if they have forgotten who he is and what he is like.

He is the firstborn and it is a fixing of his credentials, not that he is the first created as those who would like to indulge and dip into heresy would talk about, but he is the first born that title that speaks of preeminence, that speaks of his being the inheritor, that speaks of his being a primary, significant, important and the most important over both creation and verse 15, he is the first born over all creation and also in redemption he is the first born from among the dead and the sense of his significance, the sense of his importance, the sense both in creation and in redemption that Jesus Christ is all in all.

[7 : 26] He is absolutely everything. He is everything in this life, he is everything in this world and he is everything to a world that don't even acknowledge that and see that in him.

So we have a passage that speaks of the supremacy of Jesus Christ himself and Paul deliberately I think uses that almost repetitive language in verse 16 for by him, all things were created and then we have in him, for him and through him in these different verses.

So we have the Savior God who created all things, so Jesus is the Creator God, he has all power and all authority is subject to him because he is the Creator God, he is outside of the creation, he is separate from the creation, he hasn't come out of the creation, he hasn't evolved from the creation, he is the Creator.

By him all things were created, things in heaven and in earth, things visible and invisible, thrones, powers, rulers and authorities all created by him and all created for him, for his glory.

This is a Christocentric universe, it is not a man centred universe, the universe doesn't exist for man kind, a human kind even for the creation itself, it exists for Christ.

[9 : 05] It is an astonishing claim, it is an outrageous claim that it is all for him, in all his glory and all his majesty, by him and for him and in verse 17, in him is before things, all things and in him all things hold together.

We have this sovereign knitting fabric that is Jesus Christ, he holds together all things, all things that we see in science, all things that we see in nature, all things that we see in humanity, all things we see in community, all things are held together by him and his fabric and by his power.

It is an astonishing, we demand independence, we feel independent, we believe we are independent but God is saying through His word that it is all in him and in his astonishingly great being everything holds together, everything holds together by him.

This great universe in which we live and through him in verse 20 we are told God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth, things in heaven by making peace through his blood.

So we have got this sense in which by him and for him and in him and through him, not just in creation but also in salvation, this reconciliation, it is fact that we are brought back to God, this death on the cross which we remember this evening as Christians as we sit at the Lord's table, as we eat the bread and drink the wine we remember as broken body and shed blood, we have this sense in which there is an all encompassing redeemer that takes us out of a small parochial free church, ritualistic service that we do now and again in communion but that we are recognizing and seeing and understanding this great saviour through whom and in whom all things are, all things hold together.

[11 : 26] Christ is Lord, He is not just Lord of our own individual lives or of our psychology or of our spiritual corner of our lives, He is Lord of all and there will be a day when all will recognize that.

I know it does not look like that now but by faith we believe that, faith we believe that this is the God who has revealed himself in Christ, a God by whom the universe is sustained and moves to his rhythm, unparalleled teaching, God who has revealed and made himself visible in the person of Jesus Christ.

An imaginably significant saviour, God in the flesh, this God, the fullness of God dwelling in the person of Jesus Christ, worthy this evening of your worship and of my worship.

Also is a Christ who is absolutely supreme and also the Christ who is sufficient, absolutely sufficient in every way and it is a repeating again of his supremacy because not just in him and by him and through him but also we see here all things repeated again and four times, all things were created in him, all things were created by him, he is before all things and in him all things hold together.

So of this repetition that God is sovereign over all things, not just in salvation and redemption, not just in religion, not just on Sundays but in all things he is sufficient and Christ holds both life and salvation together.

[13 : 31] So we recognise and see Christ as a sufficient saviour for all of our lives and the God who is sovereign over all of our lives. We argue strongly against a sacred secular divide.

What is very difficult to do is to not have a sacred secular divide. Very difficult for a minister to do in a professional basis where your professional life is also tied up with your faith I guess and so there is a constant battle of not dividing secular and sacred.

And it is I think a battle for all of us that Christ is Lord of all of life and of all of our life as Christians. We don't believe in a religious segment or we oughtn't to. We don't believe in that sacred secular divide in our lives where Christ has this part but I have this part you know.

And sometimes I think even our understanding of the commandment of the Lord's day is a difficult misinterpretation for us where we feel that somehow God teaches you can have six days, I just want one and you can do what you like in these six days but I want this one day of worship so that we can become very compartmentalized in keeping a day separate for him.

[15 : 13] I'm not arguing for or against that particular thinking at the moment other than being aware that the special day of worship and of rest given by God however we choose to interpret and understand that is not a license for us to keep the other six for ourselves midnight to midnight then I'm free.

It's Christ's world, it's Christ's life and he's sufficient for all of life and we are asked to be living sacrifices. At one level all of our lives is a Sabbath rest, all of our lives is hidden in him, all of our lives is a redemptive day, all of our lives is worship so we don't make the secular sacred divide, when you go to your workplaces you go as Christ's, you go to work, you go to serve, you don't go to preach but you go to work for God's glory, the best way you can and you serve as honestly in his power and dependent on his Holy Spirit in all of us like Christ is the Lord of all things and we can see everything through that particular lens and we can enjoy all of life's good gifts and all of life's beauties and the knowledge that God is the giver in Christ for all these things.

But of course we recognize also he is sufficient not just for our lives and for being Lord of our lives but he's sufficient for us absolutely in salvation and that he through his work reconciles us to himself and that is what is so great that we remember this evening that Christ is the one who has already opened a door for us to redemption and to being back in a relationship with God as children who are adopted no longer alienated, no longer separated from the Father, from all the benefits of his love, from his finished work available and sufficient for us.

The reconciliation presupposes a divide, the peace presupposes a dis-peace, the unity presupposes a dis-unity that's there and Christ is the one in him and through him that we can enjoy all of these things, we can enjoy closeness with God, peace with God, not only enjoy but it's happened, it's there as we come to faith, it is achieved for us in Christ and I'm saying that because I know sometimes people don't feel that, they don't feel reconciled to God which if we consider his all things and his supremacy and in him and by him and through him and in him, with him, everything is his, it's significant is it not that we recognize and know what he has done on our behalf, it's important that we know his peace and that we know unity among ourselves, he's sufficient for all of these things, he's sufficient to bring us back to God, to bring us into unity and to give us his peace, why?

Because all the fullness of God dwells in him, he's the supreme Lord and all that we could attribute to God, we attribute to Jesus in his life giving, love giving, wisdom giving, light giving, justice giving, power giving, characteristics that is in Christ and is there for us and in us, we have in our

relationship with Christ the availability of the sovereign God in our lives, I'm not sure why sometimes it doesn't look like that, I'm not sure why we don't act like that other than we battle against unbelief, Lord I believe help my unbelief but we need to re-channel ourselves again and again and again to the scriptures that teach us these things that aren't just made up, that aren't fabled but come, we believe from the Holy Spirit of God Himself as He teaches us, so we remind ourselves that it is in Christ, in that relationship with Christ, it's in that union with Christ, it's in that work of Christ, it's in that shadow of Christ, it's in Christ, it's in Christ, it's in Christ however often we say it that our hope is, it's not going to be in our methodology or in our programs or in our technology or in our modernity or anything like that, it's in our relationship with Jesus Christ and when you feel the weakness of the body of Christ and the people of Christ, when you feel powerless in your own Christianity and that Christ is far away, if you're feeling misunderstood or you feel it's stupid to believe these things in such a modern scientific technological world, I ask you as I have to do myself to meditate on who you are and to whom you belong, to think about Him and to consider Him and to remember Him because He is everything, not just for us and not just for the church but He is everything, everything that there is is in Him and by Him and for Him and through [21 : 17] Him, that is how great our Saviour is. So very briefly can we remember as we sit at the Lord's table where we were once you were alienated from God and with enemies in your mind because of your evil behaviour but now He's reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you wholly in His sight without blemish, free from accusation.

Can you remember that? And can you remember that's the condition of those who are out of Christ, who are not Christians, that they're alienated from God? You see it's a relational statement that we're separated from God, we're not in relation and relationship with God. Many, many people maybe don't feel that, don't feel alienated from God and are drifting towards an afterlife that they have no concept of what is involved in it. But our responsibility and our life's work and our understanding of Scripture and our understanding of God's nature is to remind ourselves in them that there isn't spiritual neutrality and that if people are not in Christ, reconciled through Christ, then they remain enemies of God. However hard that is to acknowledge and that is a spur to our lives and above all I hope to our prayers that without Christ people are in the worst place in the universe, in the universe, the worst place in the universe because in Him and through Him and by Him is everything.

People are flirting or tinkering or drifted from their first love and we need to remind ourselves and also those who are outside of Christ of the urgency of dealing with Jesus Christ and of His claims in their lives. But we remember as we sit also at the Lord's table in Christ we are without blemish free from accusation. Holy, clean, free from judgment from the wrath that is to come. Unpopular, uneasy, truth, uneasy terminology to use.

What we recognise this sovereign Lord before whom all will stand is our Redeemer and He is freed us from guilt and we are at peace with Him to know life to the full. Please don't allow Satan to paralyze you into thinking that you have no hope or that you can do nothing to make yourself right or that Christ is weak and powerless in your thinking because He declares you free from accusation and without blemish. And the encouragement is for us therefore to continue in the faith. If you continue in the faith established in firm not moved from the hope held out in the gospel, this is the gospel that you have heard and that is what we are to do. It is not saying that you can be lost, what He is saying is that the only way that we can go forward is in the faith, continuing to have faith in Jesus

Christ, trusting in Him. That is one of the reasons that we have the Lord's supper because it refocuses our attention, our thinking, our minds on Christ and on God. And may it be that as we do so that we renew our sense of who He is and that we live by faith, that you pray and seek more faith, that gift from God. When you are struggling, you ask Him for His faith, for His gift, for more belief and for more understanding of His grace and of His love and of His sovereignty and of His might and of His power and that you will know His sufficiency and His sovereignty and His supremacy in your life. May that be true for us all as we consider Jesus Christ and think about Him for a few moments this evening.

[26 : 09] Let's bow our heads and pray. Lord God, we ask and pray that you would bless your word to us. We ask that we would focus on your word. We thank you that it speaks of a Christ so far removed often from the idol that we have moulded in our own image or a God that we think there should be and a God that fits in with what seems to be happening around us.

When we recognise and we look, when we see by sight, just as the psalmist often looked by sight and could look around him and think, well where is God? Where is He? There is no sign of Him. I don't see this God that is promised and this God who reveals Himself.

And yet Lord God, it is so often because we are looking with just our own eyes and our own thinking and we are ceasing to see with the eye of faith. And yet we recognise and acknowledge this evening much mystery, much sadness, much darkness. But we give thanks Lord God that the evil that remains in this world and the battles and the struggles and the difficulties are temporary and that you are ushering your kingdom and that one day that we look forward to a home of righteousness in new heavens and in new earth where all will be made clear and when we know and understand and when we luxuriate in eternal life to the glory of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. How far from our thinking often is the idea of a Christ centred universe. How often for us it is a me centred universe or even a people centred universe. And yet Lord in your purity, your goodness and your perfection we give thanks that it is a God centred universe and not a capricious or careless or insensitive or evil or malicious God but a good and a holy and a pure and a just God.

We rejoice in that in all the injustice and all the impurity we see around us and we pray for your kingdom to come. Bless us as we spend few moments in peace and quiet at the Lord's table. For Jesus' sake, amen.