

“The Preeminence of Christ”
Colossians 1:18
(Preached at Trinity, February 18, 2018)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. When we began the Book of Colossians I stated that it is without equal in the exaltation of Christ. We are surely seeing this reality displayed in these verses.
 - A. In **Verses 13-14** Paul describes Jesus as the Redeemer through whom we receive forgiveness of sin.
In **Verse 15** Paul describes the incarnation of Christ – He is the exact image of God.
In **Verse 16** we read that the Lord Jesus Christ is the cause of all things. All things find their existence in Him.
"all things have been created through Him and for Him."
The One who existed before anything was caused all things to come into existence.
 - B. Last time we saw in **Verse 17** that not only did Jesus exist before creation and is the source of creation, He is also the sustainer of creation.
Everything functions according to the Word of His power.
2. Now, as we come to **Verse 18** Paul displays Christ to the highest of heights. He begins to describe the preeminence of Christ. From here through **Verse 23** Paul's focus is upon the relationship of Christ and His church. Paul's purpose to set forth the excellence of Christ as the solution to every problem in the Church and the means by which we will press on, bearing fruit until the end.
Colossians 1:28 NAU - "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ."
3. In **Verse 18** Paul uses several expressions to describe the preeminence of Christ—His grand supremacy above all.
 - A. "head of the body" – The head is the chief part of the body. All of the functions of the body begin with the head.
 - B. Then Paul uses three phrases that further describe preeminence.
 - "He is the beginning" - ἀρχή - We know this word from **John 1**
John 1:1 NAU - "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."
All things begin and end with Christ.
Revelation 22:13 NAU - "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."
 - "the firstborn from the dead" – drawing attention to the resurrection.
1 Corinthians 15:20 NAU - "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep."
 - "so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything."
KJV - "that in all *things* he might have the preeminence"

- I. The Preeminence of Christ as our Head - "He is also the head of the body"
- A. What a contrast between believers and unbelievers
1. He is our Head. Contrast this with the lost being under His feet.
Psalm 110:1 NAU - "The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."
 2. Paul says in Philippians 2 that every knee will bow before the throne of Christ, but for most it will be as vanquished enemies.
- B. Christ is life-giving head of the Church. Jesus is the organic head of the church
1. In our physical body our head directs everything in the body; the body cannot exist without the head.
 2. The Church is the body of Christ
"He is also head of the body, the church"
 3. Just as the head is essential to the life of the body so Christ is essential to the church. And He is essential to our Christian life. We receive our lifeblood from Him.
 4. Jesus taught this.
John 15:5 NAU - "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."
 5. If we are a part of the body of Christ this makes us uniquely connected to one another. Each part of the body must look out for the wellbeing of the whole. Schisms and divisions must be carefully guarded against, lest the body be divided.
Nicolas Byfield: "If the church be the body of Christ, and we are members of this body, we should learn to carry ourselves one towards another in all humbleness of mind, and long-suffering, supporting one another, and keep the bond of peace in the unity of the Spirit. We should willingly distribute to the necessities of the saints, and rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep, by all means shunning to give offense in the least thing, especially not censorious, or contentious in matters of indifference."¹
- C. Christ is also the ruling head of the Church
1. Headship can imply authority
Ephesians 5:22-23 NAU - "Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body."
1 Corinthians 11:3 NAU - "But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ."
 2. Jesus is our Lord and King. He governs us. He has absolute authority over us
One of the great statements of the Christian faith is, "Jesus is Lord."
It is one of the earliest Christian creeds

¹ Byfield, Nicolas, *Commentary on Colossians*, (Stoke-on-Trent: Tentmaker Publications, 2012) Page 118.

3. After the ascension of Christ He returned to His throne of glory where He rules with authority and dominion. Every believer willingly and joyfully places himself under this authority or Lordship.
4. Is Jesus your Lord and King? Do you submit to Him in all things?

II. The Preeminence of Christ in His death and resurrection
"the firstborn from the dead" –

- A. First, we must understand that He died
 1. Jesus was born to die
Matthew 20:28 NAU - "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."
John 10:17 NAU - "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again."
 2. The death of Christ was a propitiatory sacrifice. It was a vicarious sacrifice. He laid down His life for His people, shedding His blood as an atoning sacrifice.
- B. Jesus did not remain in the grave
Acts 13:32-34 NAS - "And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, ³³ that God has fulfilled this *promise* to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'Thou art My Son; today I have begotten Thee.' ³⁴ "And as for the *fact* that He raised Him up from the dead, no more to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: 'I will give you the holy *and* sure *blessings* of David.'"
 1. The Resurrection is testimony that His sacrifice was accepted by the Father
 2. Jesus was raised that He might be established as the Mediator of the New Covenant.
 3. Jesus promised that His resurrection was the surety that He would come again for His church
John 14:1-3 NAU - "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ² "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³ "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also."
 4. The resurrection is the surety of our own resurrection. Jesus is the first-fruit of our resurrection. He was raised first. We shall follow.
1 Corinthians 15:20 NAU - "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep."

- C. We must follow Him in His death and resurrection
1. We must not fear to follow Him in death
Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "Jesus bids us come and die."²
 2. The whole of the NT describes a discipleship that shares with Christ in His sufferings and death.
Luke 14:26-27 NAU - "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. ²⁷
"Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."
Romans 8:16-17 NAU - "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*."
Philippians 3:10-11 NAU - "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹ in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."

III. The Preeminence of Christ in all things

"so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything."

- A. Jesus Christ has dominion over all the earth
1. In His resurrection and ascension He has been raised to supreme exaltation
Philippians 2:9 NAU - "God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name"
 2. Paul described this well in his letter to the Church of Ephesus
Ephesians 1:20-22 NAU - " which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.
 3. Jesus is Lord of all. This reality is not affected by a person's stubborn refusal to admit it and bow before Christ in submission. Jesus is still Lord of all. In the end all will bow.
- B. Jesus has particular preeminence in the church
1. Jesus told His disciples before sending them forth in the Great Commission
Matthew 28:18 NAU - "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."
 2. After describing the universal supremacy of Christ in **Ephesians 1** Paul then added:
Ephesians 1:22 NAU - "And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church"

² Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, *The Cost of Discipleship*, (New York: Macmillan, 1963) page 99.

3. The chief distinctive of our church is “Christ Centered” To declare our church to be Christ Centered is a declaration that He is at the heart of everything we are and everything we do. It is a declaration of His preeminence.
 - a. As a church we find our being in Him. He is our strength. Without Him we cease to be.
It’s been said, “Use the world, Live for Christ.”
Too many in the modern church use Christ and live for the world.
 - b. In **Rev. 3** the Church of Laodicea was in a horrible condition. They were no longer united to Christ. They were empty, poor, blind, and naked—and they didn’t even know it.
Revelation 3:17 NAU - "Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked"
 - c. They were headless. Their source of life was gone.
A church without Christ as head is a dead church – a church without life.
 - d. Paul affirms this in **Chapter 2**
Colossians 2:19 NAU - "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."

Conclusion:

1. Jesus has supremacy in everything. He owns all things. He deserves worship from every creature.
Psalms 2:11-12 NAU - "Worship the LORD with reverence And rejoice with trembling. ¹² Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish *in* the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!"
2. Peter spoke of the wicked who would not bow before Christ.
2 Peter 2:1 NAU - "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves."
He wasn’t speaking of Jesus purchasing them in the sense of their pardon. Rather, Jesus purchased them in the sense of His supremacy and exaltation.
He has been given the name which is above every name. Jesus is Lord.
3. Do you recognize the supremacy of Christ? Is it reflected in your life? Does He have first place? First place in your marriage, in your family, in friendships, in profession. First place in time, in money, in pleasure, in eating, in what you watch, in how you worship? Does He have first place in everything.