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The Supremacy of Christ Over all of Life Colossians 1:12-17

Dear Congregation,

I believe that one of the greatest needs of the contemporary church is a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ. By this I do not mean that we see him by way of a mystical vision, or a euphoric trance but that by faith we might know him, experience him, and live in the knowledge of him. It is through knowing Christ that Christians and churches truly thrive.

This is in contrast to the popular teaching today which says that for a church in order to thrive it needs to have better music, to be more people oriented, or to be more entertaining, then the church will thrive! I trust you have heard these things. But they are simply not true.

You see, when Paul wrote to the Colossian church, they were a church struggling internally with false doctrines, and he didn't suggest any of those things to them. Instead, Paul sets before their eyes that which they truly need in order to thrive, in order to have a lively faith, an accurate picture of their redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Lesson: Thus, it is the most important endeavour of our lives to enjoy, know, and live for the Christ of the gospel.

So Paul sets before our eyes Christ as he truly is. He is the Lord over all (Acts 2:26), the one through whom all things were created (Jn. 1:3), the author and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2), the *alpha and the omega the beginning and the end* (Rev. 12:2), the one who all authority in heaven and on earth is given (Matt. 28:18). He sets before our eyes a Christ who is supreme (of highest rank) over every facet of our lives.

Our headings are:

1. The Supremacy of Christ in the New Creation (vv. 12-14).
2. The Supremacy of Christ over the Physical Creation (vv.15-17).

Point 1: The Supremacy of Christ in the New Creation (vv.12-14).

“giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” (vv.12-14 NKJV).

Two weeks ago we looked at Paul's prayer for the Colossian church and verses 12-14 are the conclusion to the Apostle Paul's prayer for the Colossian church. This prayer is so Christ centered. From the prayer of the Apostle Paul it is evident that we are saved by the merit and passion of Christ alone. Christ is sufficient in himself to procure salvation for us, without the Jewish ceremonies and the philosophies of the false apostles. This prayer is profound. How is it that Paul prays with such passion and gospel clarity?

Paul's heart was in his writing, and he was always conscious that he too was a sinner saved by grace. And if you look at verses 12-14 they key words are *“darkness, light, inheritance, and forgiveness of sins.”* What may not be immediately evident is that you have seen these words before, because Paul is writing from experience.

You of course remember Saul's conversion on the Damascus road? Notice what Jesus says to Saul in Acts 26, *“And He said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting (v.15)... I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you (v.16)... to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me’* (v.18). Paul is writing from his own salvation experience. The Apostle Paul wrote in his prayer that same salvation that was bestowed upon him is that same salvation for all unworthy penitent sinners. You see what he is saying right?

Paul is teaching that there is one way of salvation. It's not that the Colossian church has one way of salvation, the Galatians another way, Paul a different way, no! Salvation is an act of God the Father in Christ, by the power of the Spirit saving you by transferring you from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. All peoples who experience salvation are saved in the same manner. When you get to heaven there will not be one soul there who happened upon glory apart from Jesus' gospel. Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”* (Jn. 14:6). There is only one means of salvation.

So Paul prays, I am “*giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.*” (v.12 NKJV). Knowing that just like in the case of Paul, it is God who does the qualifying and saving.

Application:

1. Paul gives thanks for his salvation he has received in the gospel. Nothing warrants our thanks more than being a child of God.

Now Paul does not just stop there but he connects two benefits without which no one can stand before God.

1.1 - *Deliverance from Darkness* (v.13a).

“*He has delivered us from the power of darkness*” (v.13a NKJV).

What we must see in this half-verse is three things. Who does the rescuing? Who is being rescued? And what you are being rescued from!

First, Paul says *he has delivered us*. Which connects this verse to the proceeding verse, verse 12 which speaks of God the Father. Now we shouldn't make much of Paul mentioning the Father specifically because by it Paul refers to the whole of the Trinity. But this is important because you remember that one of the issues in the Colossian church was that it was God *plus* Jewish ceremonies, God *plus* the philosophies of man. But Paul contradicts that and says it is God who does the rescuing.

Second, Paul speaks of who God has rescued. “*For he has delivered us*”. God has delivered needy sinners by his grace. Let us not be ashamed to be counted among those who are in need of God's mercy.

Third, God rescues his church from the domain, or kingdom of darkness. Now, what is the kingdom of darkness?

1. The Bible speaks of Satan as the ruler over that which is evil (2 Cor. 4:4), who blinds people from seeing the gospel. The first aspect of the kingdom of darkness is that it is kept by the evil one (Of course, we affirm God is sovereign even over Satan). If you are not a child of God you are a child of the devil (1 Jn. 3:10>
2. The Bible also speaks of the power of sin at work in the sons of disobedience (Eph. 2:2). This sin blinds our understanding, corrupts our wills, and places us in a condition of darkness.
3. Third, the Bible speaks of the power of the grave and hell. In Matthew 25:30 Jesus said, “*And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*” (NKJV). It is described as an infernal darkness, of pain and misery, that beacons to all apart from Christ.

Let it be known this day that all humans by their very nature are children of wrath (Eph. 2:3) and apart from divine mercy we are birthed, live, and delight in darkness now and forevermore. But if you are a Christian, you have been lifted out of the wallow and now free from the darkness, free from sin and Satan. The application is clear:

Application:

1. Having been rescued from the powerful domain of darkness let us now live as citizens of the light. A citizen of darkness seeks to indulge the flesh, a citizen of the light denies himself: taking up his cross daily. A citizen of darkness treats their spouse and kids as a means to an end, a citizen of heaven sees them as God's gift to steward. The motto of the citizen of darkness is “you only live once”, a citizen of heaven looks forward to the life to come in Christ.
2. Don't become too attached to the things of this world, they are part of this dark world. Instead, make the things of redemption your greatest treasure. Treasure worship. Salvation, the gospel, your family, and most of all God as your greatest good.

1.2 - *Transitioned into the Kingdom of the Son of His Love* (v.13b).

The wonder of the gospel is that God has not left his children in that miserable state of darkness. “*He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,*” (v.13b NKJV).

That word in your NKJV pew Bible, “*conveyed*” or in the KJV, “*translated*” John Davenant says that word has been borrowed from those who plant colonies and compel people to migrate from their native soil in order to inhabit a new region. In this same way God has translated us from the kingdom of darkness, which is our native soil (Eph. 2:5), into the kingdom of his Son.

How has he done this? God translates us from that melancholy and gloomy kingdom, when he illuminates our hearts pouring into them faith, when he changes and restores our will by imparting grace; it is by this enlightening and sanctifying that a man or a woman is translated into the kingdom of the Son.

Now let us observe for one moment the contrast between these two kingdoms. The kingdom of Satan is the kingdom of darkness, ignorance, wickedness, and misery. The kingdom of Christ is the kingdom of saving knowledge, of righteousness, love, and happiness. Now these two have been set before you which do you long for? Do you long for the kingdom of covetousness, adultery, anger, pride, the kingdom of sin? Or do you long for the kingdom of Christ?

And if you do desire the kingdom of Christ, what stands in your way is sin. But fear not, for God has provided a mediator. *“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins”* (vv.13-14). God provides for us a mediator, a bridge of salvation, to heaven.

To be in the kingdom of God is not simply as easy as immigrating to a new land, for we must deal with the sticky problem of sin. We are sinners in the land of darkness, and God is holy in the land of light. The way that God translates us to the kingdom of his light is by the mediation of his Son. The Lord Jesus gave up his life to take upon himself our sins that he might give us his righteousness. We are transferred into the kingdom of Christ through his blood that was shed upon Calvary’s cross. Paul points at the bloody death of Christ; and says through that there is complete satisfaction for sins.

Do you see how much greater he is then any other God? How much greater he is then works righteousness, he is of the highest ranking saviours. Supreme in your salvation. Trust in him alone.

Point 2: The Supremacy of Christ over the physical Creation (vv.15-17).

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.” (vv.15-17 NKJV).

We notice that word *image*, and Paul is painting for us a picture of the redeemer that we might have security and hope in his preeminence. You see, the Colossian church was dealing with people who were saying that Christ is not enough to reveal God, he is not sufficient to bring you to salvation. You need to worship angels as well as Christ (Col. 2:18). But the first thing Paul reveals to us in verse 15 is that Jesus perfect reveals God.

2.1 - Christ is the Image of God

“He is the image of the invisible God” (V.15a).

Paul speaks of Christ as the image of the *invisible* God. Meaning that through Christ alone is the invisible God made manifest unto us. This is what John said Christ came to do in John 1:18, *“No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, (Jesus) he has made him known.”*

No creature could ever have represented God. Think of the attributes of your heavenly Father and tell us any creature that comes close to exhibiting them. Think of God’s perfect wisdom, Solomon was the wisest man there ever was, yet fell abysmally short of God’s wisdom. Think of God’s goodness, his righteousness, think of his power. Nothing on earth comes close to revealing to us the God of the universe.

Thus, God must reveal himself in someone with whom he is equal with. Even Christ himself could not truly represent God to us if he were not the Word of God, coequal with the Father.

God in himself, in his naked majesty, is invisible; not only to the physical eye but also to the human understanding. But he is revealed to us in Christ alone, and in him we behold the fullness of the Godhead. For Jesus himself said, *“He who has seen Me has seen the Father”* (Jn. 14:9).

This means that we must take care not to seek God anywhere else or outside of Christ. We must only seek to behold God in the person of Christ, and anything else that claims to represent God is an idol and should be resisted.

Second, though we do not see Christ yet. We will. *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”* (Matt.5:8), 1 John 3:2, *“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is..”* We will see God one day in the person of Christ! Let us sigh and look forward to that day where Christ shall be revealed to us in glory. And while we are still yet here on earth let us seek to behold him with the eye of faith.

2.2 - Christ is the Firstborn of Creation

Now when we see or hear those words *firstborn* we tend to not know what they mean, or even squirm at the claims of some that Christ was created and not eternal. But the lesson we can learn here is that scripture must be read in context.

“*He is the image of the invisible God, the **firstborn** over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the **firstborn** from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.*” (vv.15-18).

So you see beloved, that the words *firstborn* are actually used twice in four verses. And in verse 18 where it says, *firstborn from among the dead* we do not assume that Christ was reborn, or re-created when he rose from the grave. Rather, we believe that it is through him that we are given life by his resurrection.

Hence, the same applies to verse as well. He is not called the firstborn of creation because he was the first created being, or because he proceeded all creatures in time, but because he is the foundation of all creation, and that all things live, move, and have their being in him. All things were created by Christ.

1. “*Heaven and earth*”

a. Meaning the highest heavens, the abode of the angels, the stars in the sky. The earth, mountains, lakes, and grass and all therein are his creation.

2. “*Visible and Invisible*”

a. He made the sun and the moon, the sky and the stars. Humans, plants and animals. He also made the angels and the souls of mankind.

3. “*Thrones or powers or rulers or authorities*”

a. He also made heaven, the dwelling place of God’s majesty.

And verse 17 tells us that he holds it all up by his powerful hand! *He is before all things, and in him all things hold together*” (v.17). Jesus Christ is the glue that keeps our universe from ripping apart. His mighty arm is what keeps the earth from falling out underneath our feet and plunging us into hell.

Finally, just notice the end of verse 16, “*all things were created by him and for him.*” Christ himself is the final cause. The reason for our salvation. The reason for this creation is the glory and good pleasure of our great God. He is not only the supreme God over our salvation but the God of the heavens and earth.

Application:

1. If Jesus is not only supreme over our spiritual lives but also our physical lives, that means that we must now live for him. He died not only to redeem our souls from hell, but to redeem our lives that we might live for him.
2. Steward the earth to the glory of God. Care for the possessions God has given you. Don’t be reckless with your wealth. Invest in the kingdom of God on earth.

Conclusion:

Jesus is Lord. In fact, he is the *Lord of lords*. Meaning that he is of the highest rank. Yet, he does not treat you as a worthless subject but counts you as a friend (Jn. 15:14), family (Jn. 1:12), and his prize (Heb. 12:2). If the God of the universe would esteem us so, should we not make him our treasure? Our daily desire to know him? He is the supreme over our lives, let us embrace him and delight in the God of our salvation.