

The Supremacy And Sufficiency Of Christ

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[0:00] Well this evening I'm going to look at the section we read earlier of Paul's letter to the church in Colossae because I want to leave by focusing our sights on the greatness of Jesus. I also want us to leave here this evening having seen some of the greatness of Jesus and the church in Colossae was a great church.

They loved Jesus. They had a great minister, a guy called Apapharis and he was the one teaching them about Jesus. He was the one who planted the church there.

But there was a problem. Some other teachers they were coming alongside teaching something else. They thought, yeah Jesus is great. The gospel that's great. That's how you start in the Christian life. You start with Jesus in the gospel but there's more to experience, a deeper knowledge, greater spiritual things. You need more than the gospel Apapharis is giving you.

Why would they be tempted by this? Perhaps the Christian life began to feel a bit ordinary, a bit mundane. And the Colossians knew that it wasn't meant to be like this. They wanted more. They knew Jesus was important. So when away came along that meant you could keep Jesus and get all these other things, deeper things, fuller things. That's quite tempting, isn't it? But it's false. You're being taught that you need Jesus plus these other things to be a truly spiritual Christian. And if we're honest, I think we can empathize with the Christians in Colossae. Perhaps not right now, but there will be times in life, times when you love Jesus. But following Him, well it seems a bit ordinary, a bit mundane. We think, is this it? We want life to the full. That's what

Jesus promised, didn't he? John 10, life to the full. We want some sort of spiritual spinach like Popeye. Something we eat and it transforms us into super Christians. Perhaps we might look for more of God in euphoric times of praise. Or maybe we look to hear the very voice of God speaking as he seems to do to other people. Or maybe we want to feel closer to God so we need to do certain things, pray certain things, read certain books. I've done that.

[3:15] Sure I'm not alone. I remember when I was doing my last degree and the ESB study Bible was just out. There were some Christians in the Christian Union and they just seemed to be really spiritual. I wanted to be like them. And I remember thinking, if I just got one of those big leather bad boy Bibles, I'll be just like those super spiritual Christians. I wouldn't lack anything then. Of course I was wrong, wasn't I? Or maybe we know all the right things. But we feel spiritually cold. Dead even. And think of I was only like so and so. If I just had their life circumstances, I wouldn't be like this. If only I had more. Now don't miss here what

I mean here. Wanting more is a great thing as long as it's wanting more of Jesus. Not moving on to something else. See read verses 1 to 14 and pull once he expects Christians to grow. He prays that they that they grow that they keep growing. He prays that they may grow in knowledge to understand more and more of what they already have in Christ. He says don't look somewhere else dig deeper.

Just look at how that section ends from verse verse 12. Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you. If you're a Christian this is true of you. Who has qualified you, you, me, to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Wow. And then it's as if Paul goes, wait, I want you to know more of who the Son is. I'm not sure you fully get this. I want you to really get who he is. I want you to be hold Jesus so you never want to move on to anything else. That's the big thing he wants to do here. So how does Paul do this? Well, he teaches them about the supremacy and the sufficiency of Jesus. That's our two points for this evening. See the

Colossians, they, Colossians, you read the letter and we see that they had buzzwords, buzzwords they love, things like fullness, maturity, knowledge. Without even talking about false teaching, what Paul does is he subverts them to show how great Jesus is. He wants the Colossians to grasp how can you add something to everything. Now, let me show you what I mean here. Look down at your Bible and scan through chapter one and just spot all the, the alls, the everys, the fulls, the holes in these verses, the universals you could call them.

Let me run through some of them quickly for us. Chapter one, verse six, the gospel which has come to you as indeed in the whole world is bearing fruit and increasing. Verse nine, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

[7:04] Verse 10, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

111, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might for all endurance and patience with joy. Pulsing the whole world is being changed. Every part of life is changed. All the power of God enables us to do something and look at our passage this week. Verse 15, he is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created. All things were created through him and for him. Verse 17, and he is before all things and in him all things hold together. Verse 19, for in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile to himself all things. Verse 23, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which been proclaimed in all creation under heaven and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

How can you add something to everything? You can't. Paul saying Jesus is everything.

He is Lord of everything. That means his message is for every person in every time. The message of the supremacy of Christ in all things and the sufficiency of Christ in salvation. What do you mean by supremacy? What does Paul mean by it? Well, that there's no higher authority. There's no higher power. There's no higher status. We see this in verse 15, two titles Jesus is given. Titles are funny things aren't they? Sort of hear someone's title and you get it. Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, we know what that means. But you're pushing it a bit more. What does that actually mean? That's something this verse is like. What does it actually mean that Jesus is the image of the invisible God? Well, Paul tells us this in verse 15 and explains what they mean in verse 16 to 17. Let's look at these two titles. First off, the image of the invisible God. What does Paul mean here by image? Well, the image of God, it's not like a picture of my daughter, my daughter of me. Sort of a rounded square, some glasses and some arms and legs. He tells me, but it's not really me. That's not what he means here.

This is what he means. Sorry, that isn't what he means. When Paul says image, he also doesn't mean copy. He doesn't mean a replica of something like in a museum.

[9:59] When Paul says Jesus is the image of the invisible God, he's saying Jesus is the very nature and character of the invisible God. So what does that mean? So what? It means that if you want to know what God is like, you don't go looking for him in some euphoria of a worship service. You don't go looking for him in religious rituals and practices. To know what God is like, you look at Jesus in the Scriptures. You get to know him. He is the invisible God made visible. That's our first title. Son is the image of the invisible God and also he's the first born over all creation. Perhaps you've met a Jehovah's Witness before. Pass him and stone away. I didn't know the word Jehovah's Witnesses in Lewis. They take this idea to mean that Jesus is a created being. Paul, he blasts that idea out of the water. Look at what it says. It says Jesus created all things. Look onto the next bits. All things were created through him and for him at the end of verse 16.

So what does Paul mean then by first born? It's not the idea of of chronology like Jehovah's Witnesses believe, but rather to status. The first born is the heir. We saw earlier how the psalmist speaks of King David being the first born and well, he was the youngest brother wasn't he? But he went on to have the status of the oldest, the one above others. Let's put these titles together and see what Paul is saying. The son is the image of the invisible God.

Lord Jesus is fully God. He is the first born over all creation. Means everything's his. And why can Paul make this claim verse 16 for by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through him and for him and he is before all things and in him all things hold together. Paul says, think of something. Anything. The most important thing about this is this relationship to Jesus. That is, it was made by Jesus and it was made for Jesus. The visible things, you, me, this microphone, this building, the biggest things, the smallest things made by Jesus for Jesus. The invisible things. What's that? Well, it's a spiritual realm. Angels, demons, all made by

Jesus and for Jesus. But why does Paul mention these categories? Heaven and earth, visible, invisible. Why have this this middle part of the sentence? If he took it out, the sentence would still flow. So why does he keep it in? Because Paul is showing that Jesus is above the very things that being tempted by. He's saying, why go for those things when you know the one who made them? Because all things were created through Jesus and for Jesus. There's a famous composer, probably heard, named Johann Sebastian Bach. He had a trademark in his music, perhaps if you're musical, you know us already. He had a trademark which became known as the Bach motif, Bach B, A, C, H. In there's some German music theory for you.

In German musical naming, the notes B flat for us, they call B and the notes B for us, they call H. So throughout his pieces, he'd have this pattern of musical notes, B, A, C, H and you'd hear it and it would tie everything together. You'd listen to music and his name ran right throughout his pieces. His pieces of music sang about him. You listen to a piece and you knew it was by him, that it was for him and that his name and this musical motif held together. We have a guess, not the Bach motif but the Jesus motif. Just dwell on verse 16, all things were created through him and for him. Verse 17, he is before all things and in him all things hold together. Everything out there, everyone in here, whether Christian or not made by Jesus, through Jesus, for Jesus and all things held together by Jesus. So what?

[15:37] It means that you're on to an accident. It means that no matter how old you are, your life isn't worthless, your life isn't pointless. It means that you're valuable, that you're precious in the eyes of Jesus, because we're created by Jesus, crafted by Jesus. It means that he knows what makes us tick, he knows the way we're wired even better than we do, so he knows what's best for us and how we live, because we were created to buy him and for him and his mark runs right the way through us, holding us together.

Life isn't enjoyed with Jesus in this creation alone, but in the new creation as well, look at verse 18. Jesus is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, and everything he might be preeminent, that is first, that he might have the primary place. Look at how Jesus' relationship, the church is described. He is the head, the church is the body. A body can't live without its head, so why would the body look somewhere else, or to something else? A body only has one head, so why would it try to listen to something else as well as Jesus? All guidance, wisdom, and leadership comes from the head, not anywhere else. So what does that mean? It means that for a church to live, for a church to grow, he needs to stick with Jesus, to want to know more of Jesus. He is the head of the body, the church. What else does it say? Have a look as it goes on in verse 18. Jesus is also the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. What does that mean? It means he leads the way. He is the first, the founder of the new humanity, the new creation. He's the firstborn. See that title again? See as Jesus rose from the dead, it isn't just that he came back from the dead, but he rose to new life where there is no death. He inaugurated the new creation, and the church is part of this. Now it is his body, where the head goes, so the body goes. Look at what the church is connected to in verse 19.

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. The fullness of God, God is with us in Christ in verse 19. And look at verse 20. God is for us in Christ.

Jesus, God himself, supreme over all things, died on the cross to make peace, to reconcile his rebellious creation. It was a cosmic event that changed creation forever. You don't need anything else, but Jesus is a minister in Texas called Matt Chandler. He's got a helpful book, I think it's worth reading, called The Explicit Gospel, and he talks about the Gospel in two ways. He talks about how there's the Gospel from the air and the Gospel on the ground. Verses 15 to 20 they're like the Gospel from the air, big picture stuff. You're often good at the Gospel on the ground, that's that Christ died for me, and yet often forget the Gospel from the air. The problem with that is when we forget the the big picture stuff then, our Jesus is too small. And when that happens, when our

Jesus is too small, eventually we don't want to spend time with him. We fail to grasp his greatness, so eternity doesn't excite us. Jesus then eventually, well, can become a get out of hell free card. See what Paul is doing here, he's stretching our minds to see the greatness of Jesus, the grandeur of Jesus, to see that Jesus is supreme over all things. So we look outside of Jesus for something more, because he's not grasped what we have in him. So having helped us behold Jesus and his supremacy, Paul wants us to trust that Christ is sufficient in salvation. Have a look at verses 21 to 23. Paul writes, you here in these verses replies to Christians today as well. So let me read it again and put in the first person, follow along in your Bibles.

[21:04] And me who was once alienated and hostile in God doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled me in his body of flesh by his death in order to present me holy and blameless and above reproach before him. If indeed I continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the Gospel that I heard, which been proclaimed in all creation under heaven and of which I, Paul, became a minister. Let's quickly look at Paul's logic here in these verses. He goes, what you once were, verse 21, where you now stand, verse 22, and how you must go on, verse 23. Have a look at verse 21, a new who once alienated and hostile in mind.

The world says it's neutral, it's not against God. God's stuff that's fine for you if it works for you. But Jesus explained to someone they were made by Jesus, for Jesus. Well, I think their response might show you how hostile they are. Perhaps you're here and you aren't a Christian. These verses say that you belong to Jesus and yet you live as an enemy against him.

Oh, it's pretty stark, isn't it? I wonder if that's how you describe yourself. Sure, I mess up, but I'm a good person who messes up sometimes. Well, the Bible doesn't have that. See, there's a word for someone who tells lies. A liar. There's a word for someone who has sexual thoughts about someone who's not their husband or wife. An adulterer. There's a word for someone who thinks or says or does anything that falls short of God's perfection. A sinner. Enemy of God. Our minds are so twisted we justify to ourselves what we do. And for all of us, that was our past, verse 21, if not our present, separated from God, living as his enemy. But that's not the end of the story, though, is it? Verse 22, he is now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him. Because of Jesus' death on the cross, when we turn from our sin, trusting him, we are no longer enemies. Instead, we're reconciled. We're friends, friends with God. Notice he the tenses look at your

Bible reconciled past tense, holy and blameless present tense. What does that mean?

It means that when we are presented to the Lord Jesus, he'll say, yes, she's with me. He's one of mine. It means that we will be blameless. Nothing for Jesus to hold against us ready to enjoy every blessing in the new creation.

[24:26] That just blows my mind. Why is that possible? It's possible because on the cross, he was treated as we deserve, bearing God's wrath for our sin. He was treated as we deserve, so for all eternity, we would be treated as he deserves. And that's not fair, is it?

The all holy goods Jesus Christ treated as we messed up sinners deserve. So that we for all eternity will be forever blessed as he deserves. That is not fair.

That's grace and I'm so thankful for it. And if you want a Christian, this is the offer of the gospel for you today. And if you're a Christian, how can we be tempted to move on from such a savior who would do that for us? That's Paul's point in verse 23. If you want to move forward and grow, you do so by standing firm and digging down. Jesus is the one who is fully God and supreme overall, so he is the only one able to be our sufficient savior. How can we take him and think we need something more? How can we think we need something else? If I am, as described by Colossians, reconciled past tense, holy and beloved now, what more could I need? What new experience or knowledge could I need to make me right with God?

I'm reconciled. I know God. I love him. I worship him because I know Jesus Christ. Big application of the passage. Look at Jesus. Behold our God and see your soul come to life and you won't want anything else. Let me pray. Lord Jesus, you are the one who reigns overall. You are the one who is sufficient for our salvation. Lord, our love for you is so fitful, so fragile at times. Help us to dig down deeper into your words, to know more of you. May you be our joy. May you be our delight.

Help us to spare one other on in wanting to know more of you. Lord Jesus, we love you. We praise you. We thank you for your grace towards us.

[27:22] Your name you pray. Amen.