

Colossians 1 – Title: The Preeminence of Christ

Preeminence (*pre-eminence*), noun 1. the fact of surpassing all others; superiority.

The preeminence of Christ is central to an accurate view of His Person, His work, our status as believers, and the Kingdom.

When we understand the preeminence of Christ, we have a more accurate view of Him.

We more fully understand the depth of His love; we are more able to receive and to respond to His love.

Theologians believe that Colossians was written, in part, to combat heresies rising in Colossae.

The clear teaching of the preeminence of Christ is therefore taught in hopes to put an end to these misled beliefs.

1. Greeting (Colossians 1:1~2)

¹ Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, ² To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

First of all, who were these saints Paul was writing to?

Well, we get a better idea of who they were by simply defining the word.

The original Greek word that has been translated saints in English and “seito” in Nihongo is the word, *hágios*, which is actually the same Greek word for “holy”.

The fundamental (core) meaning of this word means “different”.

For example: a temple in the 1st century was *hágios* ("holy") because it was different from other buildings.

Christians are ("Holy or Saints") because they are "different from the world”.

The word (*hágios*) implies something that has been “separated”, "set apart" for God and therefore it is "different” .

The moment we dedicated our life unto the Lord we became different didn't we?

We did! We become saints, holy and separated unto the Lord.

Now some of you are looking at me kind of funny...

You're probably thinking that you, or me, or the people around us don't really seem very holy or Saintly!

Well, that may be true! But we are here aren't we?

There is something different about us right here, right now isn't there?

How many of your friends, co-workers, neighbors, like to come to church?

Ya, Joseph, okay... but I am still not convinced... that any of us are really that Holy or Saintly!

Well, what exactly are you expecting?

*Little wings and halos? (*Please put up slide of OIC's congregation picture*)

None of us are perfect angels that's for sure!

And where do you think we are? Heaven?

The church is a place where the saints gather... this is true!

But the church is more like a hospital to help heal the saints from wounds they have received each week from Satan, this world, and from our very own flesh!

And the reality is... if you ever find a perfect church... get out! Because you just messed it up!

Think about it... Are any of us perfect? No way! But are we willing to be perfected?

If so, then be encouraged today...

Philippians 1:6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

So once again let's read Paul's greeting here in...

Colossians 1:2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: **Grace** to you and **peace** from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We see these words **grace** and **peace**, coupled together, over and over throughout the New Testament.

And they are always in this order because we cannot know the peace of God, until we first experience the grace of God.

2. The preeminence of Christ in the life of the Colossians (v. 3~14)

A. Paul's thanks for the Colossians' faith in Christ (1:3~8)

³We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, ⁴since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; ⁵because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, ⁶which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; ⁷as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, ⁸who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.

Paul is writing to Christians whom he had not yet met but had only heard about.

And what he had heard prompted him to give thanks to God and to pray for them always (vs.3)!

What did he hear? What did he hear that would prompt such a response? Notice...

He heard of their...

Faith in Christ Jesus (vs. 4)

He heard of their...

Love for all the saints (vs. 4)

And he heard of their...

Hope which is laid up for you in heaven (vs. 5)

Faith, Love, and Hope. The three great virtues of the Christian life that have been emphasized and encouraged throughout the New Testament.

B. Paul's prayer for the Colossians' wisdom, fruitfulness, and Godly character (v. 9~12)

⁹ For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; ¹⁰ that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; ¹² giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

The sequence of Paul's unceasing prayer for these believers is important:

We cannot work for God unless we are walking with Him; but we cannot walk with Him if we are ignorant of His will.

The general will of God for all His children is given clearly in the Bible.

The specific will of God for any given situation must always agree with what He has already revealed in His Word.

The better we know God's general will, the easier it will be to know His specific will in our daily life.

Notice next, Paul's emphases being "strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power"(v. 11a)

What do you think about when you read these words?

We so often emphasize the powerful results of prayer or the powerful experiences of worship, or the powerful results of evangelism while neglecting the power of change in our own personal lives.

Notice Paul prayed these Christians would be...."strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for (WHAT)...

1. **All patients** (The power to endure problems).
2. **Long-suffering** (The power to endure people).

3. **Joy** (The power to rejoice while enduring problems and/or problematic people!)

These are character traits.

When we look at verses 9 , 10, and 11 together we see how they all fit together.

In verse 9. We can have all the wisdom necessary to know God's will.

In verse 10. We can have an exciting dynamic fruitful walk.

But what good are those if not backed up by Godly character.

In 2Samuel 16 we read of when Shimei publicly cursed and threw stones at King David.

One of David's guards asked if he could go over and cut off his head.

David didn't allow it. It was a personal victory of long-suffering that was perhaps as great as or even greater than when he cut off the head of the mighty Giant Goliath.

The point is this, the private victories of the soul are as great or even greater than those public victories that we look upon as being so great.

C. Paul's prayer that the Colossians would be thankful and why (v. 12~14)

Paul didn't stop there, in verses 12-14 he added....

¹² giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

Are we thankful for the sacrifice of Christ for the forgiven of our sins, rescued from the power of darkness, given the right to be called children of God and granted an eternal inheritance of His love?

If so, let it be known! Let it show in your everyday life.

I believe a good start is to simply begin to make Paul's prayer for these believers our own. Personalize it!

Lord, **I** pray (v. 10) that **I** may walk worthy and fully pleasing to You, being fruitful in every good work You have prepared for **me**. Please help **me** increase in knowledge, (v. 11) and be strengthened with all might, according to Your glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; (v. 12) thank You for calling **me** Your own, allowing **me** to be a co-heir among Your saints, (v. 13) for delivering **me** from the power of darkness to the kingdom of Your Son's love, (v. 14) who has redeemed **me** through His blood and forgiveness of all **my** sins."

If we haven't been praying for these things for our own personal life and the life of others... it isn't too late to start.

3. The preeminence of Christ in His nature and work (v. 15~18)

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. ¹⁸ 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**.

For in Jesus we see God's love, patience, kindness, gentleness, humility, mercy, wisdom, power, justice, authority, and His majesty! (Just to name a few).

On another occasion the unbelieving Jews surrounded (Jesus) and said "How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." **John 10:24b**

So, in vs. 30 Jesus went on to answered them "plainly". Notice...

John 10:30 "I and My Father are one."

It doesn't get any plainer than that!

Jesus didn't preach an "all roads lead to God" Gospel. No!

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Jesus ruled out every other religious system.

Notice... Jesus didn't say He is "a" way but "the" way to the Father.

Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

Now some cults will say that being the firstborn means that Jesus was created and therefore not God.

But this term simply refers to a position of authority.

To be "firstborn" was to hold an honored position.

The first lady, for example, is a title given to the wife of the US President.

Right now that is Melania Trump.

But that doesn't mean she is the first lady ever born! No!

It simply means that she has preeminence and priority in America by the mere fact that she is the president's wife.

So when it says that Jesus was the first born over all creation it doesn't mean he was created but rather preeminent over all creation.

Paul immediately goes on to expound upon this truth in verses 16~18 by highlighting multiple areas in which Christ has preeminence— over creation, over the Church, over death, and finally "in everything."

John said the same thing about Jesus in...

John 1:3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

But notice what Paul adds here in...

Colossians 1:16b... All things (including us) were created through Him and (notice) for Him.

Do you realize that we were created “for Christ”?

The very breath and life we enjoy today is for who? For me? For you?

This very day, that none of us were promised and have likely taken for granted, was created for Jesus.

Are we thankful for this day? We really should be.

Revelation 4:11 “You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.”

It is by God’s will that we even exist and were created in the first place!

4. Reconciled in Christ (v. 19~23)

¹⁹ For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, ²⁰ and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. ²¹ And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled ²² in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

From the time that man disobeyed God in the garden of Eden, man has been in rebellion and in war with God.

There is a spiritual warfare and battle that is going on, there is a nature of Adam that is in us, that rebels against the authority of God in our life.

There is something within our nature that is in rebellion against God.

Something within us that doesn’t want to submit to God and to the laws of God.

And thus man has been at war with God.

And if you we are at war with God, there is no way that we can have peace within ourself.

Paul tells us that it is our flesh warring against the Spirit.

And when this warfare is going on...

“There is no peace,” says the LORD, “for the wicked.” **Isaiah 48:22**

It is because of our sin, this warfare exists, that we have no peace.

But Jesus has made peace, through the blood of His cross.

He has actually made the way of peace.

He has made it possible for us to come to God, by the putting away of our sins!

And when we cry out to God for forgiveness of our sins, it is the Blood of Jesus Christ, that cleanses us.

1John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And so.... all of a sudden... there is peace.

The war is over and I am not fighting with God anymore.

It doesn't mean that I am doing everything that God wants me to do yet.

It simply means that I am not fighting against Him anymore, I am not running from Him anymore.

It is the first step to living the life we were created to live.

Colossians 1:23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

How do we continue in the faith?

1. By being grounded, steadfast, and immovable!

In what? In “the hope of the gospel which you heard”.

It is so important that our faith be established by the Word of God.

Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Why do people lack faith....?

Because they simply have not been grounded and rooted in the Word of God.

5. Sacrificial Service for Christ (v. 24~29)

²⁴ I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, ²⁵ of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, ²⁶ the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. ²⁷ To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

Now look back in verse 24 Paul said,

“I now rejoice in my sufferings for you”

Paul actually gave us a partial list of what it cost him to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, as he spoke of the various things that he endured. Notice...

2Corinthians 11:23-28 Are they ministers of Christ? --I speak as a fool--I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24* From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25* Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— 28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

And we think we have problems!!!

To be honest... I feel ashamed when I think about the problems I have in comparison to what Paul endured!

But it makes me think... How did Paul endure such troubles?

What compelled him to continue?

What held him together when things seemed to be falling apart???

Paul tells us his secret...

2Corinthians 5:14a “For the love of Christ **compels** us”

The Greek word is **sunecho** {soon-ekh'-o}

1) to hold together

1a) any whole, lest it fall to pieces or something fall away from it

2) to hold together with constraint, to compress

2a) to press together with the hand

So once again, how did Paul endure such troubles?

What held him together when things seemed to be falling apart???

It was the love of Christ that **held him together**”.

And the same love of Christ is available today for all those who desire to to be held.

Do you feel as if your life is just falling apart sometimes?

If so, then do yourself a favor. Place your life in the loving hands of Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and be held together by His love.