

Colossians 1:15-23

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[0 : 00] And we read the Word of God from the book of Colossians, first chapter, starting in verse 15. If you remember, if you joined us last week, if you didn't, you need to go back.

Your pastor's wife said you almost got a little excited on your last point last week as we began to see all that Christ has done for us in verses 12, 13, and 14, seeing the work of Christ.

And now he's going to speak of the person of Christ, starting in verse 15. So let's see, it says here, He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.

All things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also the head of the body, the church, and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself. Having made peace through the blood of His cross, through Him I say whether things on earth or things in heaven.

[1 : 16] And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.

If indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all the creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

Would you pray with me? Lord, we thank You so much for this day. God, we thank You for calling our attention to Jesus Christ. We thank You for the passage which You have put before us, and Lord, as we have read it and heard it, we pray now that our hearts and minds would be open to it. Lord, may the truth of it captivate us, and may it move us to a greater commitment to You, and a greater life lived for Your glory, and we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen.

You may be seated. Colossians 1, verses 15 through 23. I want you to see this morning that Christ is preeminent, that He is supreme and sufficient because of His preeminence.

[2 : 26] This is the only place in all the Scriptures. As a matter of fact, Colossians 1, 18 has a wording in the original language. It is only used once in Scripture, and that is that He may have the preeminence, that He may be preeminent in all things.

And this is the only place in Scripture that it is referred to. Though it is implied throughout all of Scripture, this is the direct reference to it. So I want you to see this morning that Christ is preeminent.

You know, we live in a day and an age in which first place is not necessarily heralded that much. We like to put everybody on an equal platform, and we like to say that everybody's a winner.

Everybody, just because you attempted or just because you gave an effort, that means you're a winner. But I don't want to hurt anybody's feelings, and I don't want to upset anyone, but we know the reality deep down inside of us that not everybody's a winner, right?

Someone has to win, and others have to lose. That's just the reality. In our family, we believe in real talk. That is, we set things as they are, and we believe in accurate things, that there is a first.

[3 : 28] And, of course, most of my kids will tell you, if it's not first, nothing else really matters. That's just the competitive nature of the Calvert family. We just tend to be that way if we're playing checkers or if we're playing sports. It's just kind of how it is.

And that's okay because Paul says that he competed too, right? Paul gave reference to athletic enterprises that he fought, and he boxed, and he competed as an athlete would. He trained and disciplined himself.

Because we need to understand this, that there is a such thing as one who is first, and then there is a such thing as those who fall under that. There is a preeminent one.

And what we see here in Scripture is that Christ is preeminent. He alone holds first place. There are no co-champions. There are no co-winners.

There are no two blue ribbons. It is Christ and Christ alone who is preeminent. To be preeminent literally means to be supreme in nature, to be first or above all things.

[4 : 28] And we are looking at the supremacy and the sufficiency of Christ. And we need to accept this biblical truth, that he is supreme and he is first.

He holds that position and will always hold that position. The reason Paul is writing this to the church at Colossae is because they were dealing with a major problem.

And it is a problem that we see being prevalent even today. And that is the blending of a number of thoughts and a number of beliefs. It was kind of a melting pot of, yes, Jesus is good.

We love Jesus, but we also love this. And we love that. And we love this. We want Jesus to be added to our belief system. Or we want Jesus to be added to our life as it is.

And Paul says, well, you can't add Jesus to because Jesus takes over. Right? He is supreme. He is the almighty preeminent one. It is not Jesus plus something.

[5 : 23] It is not Jesus plus our works or Jesus plus our self-sacrificial system. It is not Jesus plus our denial of foods and living up to customs and all these different things.

And it is not that Jesus is one of many, because that is something else that the church of Colossae dealt with, that Jesus, Gnosticism, had crept into the city of Colossae. Now, Gnosticism is even prevalent today.

And we need to understand what that is. And I'm not trying to get too scholarly. But Gnosticism is this. It is saying that your body is evil, that everything you do in the flesh is completely evil, and your spirit can be good or is good.

Now, that has either one of two extreme responses. Because if your body is evil, then one extreme is, well, then I'm going to literally crucify the flesh. I'm not going to feed it.

I'm not going to do anything that is appealing to the flesh. I'm going to kind of go into a monostatic kind of lifestyle. I'm going to kind of really just deny the flesh, and I'm going to live according to the spirit.

[6 : 21] Okay? Well, that sounds good in theory, but it's really bad in practice. I'll show you why in a minute. The other side of that spectrum is that the body is evil and the spirit is good. Well, if the body is evil, then let's let the body do whatever the body wants to do.

Because God's not redeeming my body. He's redeeming my spirit. And I'm going to be good in the spirit, but I can live however I want to in the body. Now, the reason both of those are bad is because you have been created in the image of God.

In the image of God, he created them. That's what scripture says, right? And he clothed you with the body. And God chose us, as Paul will say here, that Christ came in the flesh, that is in a body. He took on bodily form, and he redeemed us, or he reconciled us to God. So now that we can enjoy creation in the body and still be holy.

That we do not have to deny the body, and we do not have to let the body run rampant. I have this thought. Not a thought. It's just my opinion, okay? And you can take it as it is. God created us as we are.

[7 : 25] We are all with unique personalities. We all, my personality is not your personality, and you can say amen to that. I'm so glad there's not many more Billy Joes running around, okay? I'm a very unique individual. But in the same breath, I need to say amen, that there's not very many of you running around, because you are a very unique individual, right?

The Bible says that before we were born, God created us and formed us in our mother's womb. He made us as we are. And we have personalities, and we have our kind of mannerisms, and we all have different things about us.

We all think differently. We all behave differently. We all, all these things, right? I think it's a false misconception to think that when we come to Christ, we have to separate ourselves from the way God made us.

Now, we are, behold, all things are made new. I get that. But he's also redeeming how he made us. I think God made me with my sense of humor.

I think God made me with my personality. I think God made me the way he made me with an intentional purpose. And the beauty of coming to Christ is that God redeems that.

[8 : 27] What the world had hijacked for evil, Christ has now redeemed for good. And I can enjoy things as I have been made in the flesh in Christ.

Because he came in the flesh and died for me. He had a personality. He had mannerisms. And he is the supreme and sufficient one. It's not who I am. It's not necessarily what I do.

Though we'll get to that in just a moment. We are seeing that he is preeminent. It's all about Jesus Christ. He holds first place. Now I want you to see how Christ is preeminent in our scripture this morning.

As we have read 15 through 23. You'll see a number of them. We'll come back to the first half of verse 15 in just a moment. But the very first thing we see is that Christ is preeminent in creation. He is preeminent in creation.

It says that he is the image of the invisible God. Hold on to that. We'll come back to that later. He is the firstborn of all creation. Now some have taken this verse and said, well, if Jesus is the firstborn, then there must have been a time when he wasn't.

[9 : 31] Right? Because in order to be born, there was a time when you was not. Each of us have a birthday. Right? We have a date in which we were born. Prior to that birthday, August 6, 1980 is mine.

So prior to August 6, 1980, I was not. Right? I was in my mother's womb. I know. So go back nine months prior to that. So before that, there was a time when I did not exist. So people read this and say, well, there must have been a time when Jesus didn't exist.

Now we're reading into it just a little much. Because scripture, firstborn, doesn't necessarily mean place of beginning. It means place of occupation. It is more of a title of position rather than being a place of beginning.

And when it says, he is the firstborn of all creation, that literally means he holds the first place in all of creation. We see it in other places throughout scripture where people are referred to as the firstborn, the firstborn.

And we understand that they are not literally the firstborn. They just hold the position of being in the place of firstborn. That just literally means to be above and beyond.

[10 : 34] Okay? To be over all things. So we see here that he is over, he is preeminent over creation. He is the firstborn of all creation. And this is how you know that there was not a time when he was not.

Look at what it says in verse 16. For by him, all things were created, both in the heavens and on the earth. So everything you see around you, by him, all things were created.

He is preeminent over creation because he is first and foremost the creator. Okay? Everything you see in the heavens and everything you see on earth, no matter how big your telescope is, no matter how far out into the heavens that you can see, because we've never found the end of the heavens, right?

No matter how far the human eye will ever be able to see, we will never be able to lay eyes on something that he did not create. Think about that just for a moment.

Everything is under him. He is the beginning. He is preeminent. He is over because all things were created by him, both in the heavens and on earth.

[11 : 39] And he takes it a little further. Visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. Okay? Now what is he talking about? The visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.

Those wording there mean these heavenly beings. Paul refers to, we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the powers and principalities of the air and the spiritual forces of darkness, right? These things which we cannot see. I hope that you understand this, that in your life, you are really, especially in the Christian life, you have entered into a battleground. It is not necessarily a camping trip.

It is not a vacation, right? You have been called to be a part of the Lord's army. There is this battleground. You will fight the fight with Christ. And you are wrestling and not against other people. Let's just go ahead and say that.

The people beside you or the people outside of here that you always have problems with are not the problem. Okay? You wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the powers and the

principalities of the air and the spiritual forces of darkness.

[12:40] I know this kind of wigs us out a little bit, but we need to understand this. There is a such thing as heavenly beings, that is the angels, who gather around his throne. And then there are the fallen angels. And we refer to Satan and his demoniacs, right?

We see it all throughout Scripture. We see the man in the tombs who was inhabited by a legion of demons. And we see all the demonic influence throughout Scripture. So we must not think that it doesn't happen today that we have an enemy who fires fiery darts at us, that at times attempts to scare us, at times attempts to kind of offset us.

He attempts to cause us to stumble, I want to fall, but here is the good news. Jesus created all those things. One of the greatest comforts I find in Scripture is that he who is my biggest enemy, it's not anybody I can put a name to, he who is my biggest enemy, who is Satan, was created by he who is my biggest advocate.

The one who opposes you the most was created by the one who is for you the most. Jesus created you.

So that makes no sense. Well, yes, it does. All of creation, he is preeminent, which means this is good news, right? You need to say amen. We need to learn how to say amen. We don't have to say a-women, by the way.

[13:56] I know I got asked that the other week. I got asked Wednesday, are you supposed to say a-women? My response to that was, whenever I was growing up, if you said that, you got smacked. So what do you mean? Think about it.

Anybody ever want to go, a-women? You got smacked for that, right? So we don't say that. You don't want to get in trouble. So you just say let it be, or so be it, which is what it means, so we can go that route.

But it's a good place to say amen to the reality that the one who died for you and calls you to himself and the one who loves you more than you will ever love yourself created he who opposes you and he who is against you.

And the one that causes the most problems for you falls under the one who is the most for you. He is preeminent. He created all things. And we go on.

It says, and all things have been created through him and for him. All things. He is not only preeminent because he is creator. He is also preeminent because all creation exists for him.

[14:54] You remember in the book of Genesis when it says that God created the heavens and the earth. Remember that? And then it says that he set the heavenly host in the heavens. Do you remember if you were with me so many years ago, almost five years ago, we're coming up on five years ago when we started Genesis 1-1.

Do you remember why God set the moon and the stars in the heavens? Do you remember why he did that? I see them moving the camera because I'm moving a little too much. Sorry about that, guys. Do you know why God put the heavenly host up there?

It says that he did that for a times and seasons, right? He did that for a testimony to be a witness to himself. He did that so that we could have seasons. And then when you read the book of Genesis a little bit further, you see that those seasons were opportunities to worship.

We have all the Jewish festivals and the Passover and all these things, even that we celebrate today with Easter. Those things are dictated and determined by the seasons. God put the heavenly host out there for himself so that when man would look to the heavens, they would be reminded of who they were to worship, who they were to give attention and focus to.

All things were created by him and through him and for him. And you fall under that umbrella of all things so when you were created, you were created for him.

[16:05] He is preeminent over creation. It says in verse 17, he is before all things. Now we're still looking at his preeminence over creation because I want to show you the major problem we have with this.

He is before all things and in him, all things hold together. The reason he is preeminent or first place over all creation is because he is creator but also because he is sustainer.

In him, all things hold together. Many, many, many people get in trouble because they want to separate creation from the creator which means if there is anything in creation that you are attempting to enjoy apart from he who created it, then it's all going to fall apart in your hands because he is the one who holds it all together.

He is the sustainer. So the only way to rightfully enjoy creation is to enjoy it through the creator. He is the one who holds it all together.

He is preeminent in creation. Number two, he is preeminent in the church. Paul here is writing to a local church but he's going to speak of the church universal. He is preeminent in the church.

[17:10] It says in verse 18, he is also the head of the body, the church. He's just been speaking of creation, right? Speaking of how Christ is over everything. Look at this. So he goes from talking about him being over everything to being over something which is the church.

He is preeminent. Now, we would understand that if he's over all of creation, surely he is over the church. But Paul needed to remind the church at Colossae and he also needs to remind us. He is the head of the body, the church.

He holds a preeminent position in the church which shows us no man will ever or can ever or should ever attempt to hold first place in the church because it is Jesus alone who is first in the church.

No man leads the church. No man is the one who now leading through servanthood is one thing but no man is to be he who stands up and says, I am the head of the church because the Bible very clearly tells us that it is he and he alone who is the head of the body.

Paul here is referencing to the church universal but the church universal always applies to the church local. I know a lot of people who love to be a member of the universal church without ever joining with a local church and the reason they do that is because the universal church never meets because the universal church is invisible so there is no local body to be accountable to there is no local body to be seen in and there is no local body to serve in and the universal church is just this great spiritual truth that we can just hold on to.

[18:45] I am a member of the universal church. Right. But the universal church is always displayed in a local church. I am a very, very big proponent of the local church by the way. He said, well of course you are because you are a pastor. Well the good news is I was that way before I became a pastor.

I am a real big believer in this thing called the local church because this is the only place you will ever walk into in which Jesus is the head of it. that Jesus is the one who is first.

It is the only organization the only it is really not even an organization it is the only organism it is a living and growing thing that you will ever walk into where Jesus is the head. It says that he is preeminent in the church which means it is the church's responsibility to go where he goes and he alone goes.

Right. If we are ever going in a direction that he is not going then we are going in the wrong direction because he holds first place. So when we are trying to attempt to make a decision or we are attempting to find out where we should be going as a church we should always always consult the head.

And the reason he is the head of the church it says in verse 18 and he is the beginning the first born from the dead so that he himself will come to have first place in everything. The King James and New King James says there so that he himself will come to have preeminence.

[20:00] That is the literal translation of New American Standard first place in everything. It says that he is the beginning the first born from the dead so that he himself will come to have first place in everything.

He is preeminent over the church because he is the beginning of the church. Matthew 16 is when he founded the church and we see that so we see he is the beginning of the church and he is the first born from the dead which by the way the church just means the ecclesia the called out ones and we are called out by the resurrection right?

And he is the first born from the dead and he said wait a minute there are other people who were raised prior to him right? But they also died right? Lazarus died later on the widow son of Nain died later on Jesus is the first to be raised and to never die again because he is raised to live eternally. So we see that he is the first born from the dead he is as the book of Hebrews tells us he is the pathfinder or the path blazer because of his resurrection he is leading the way he is leading the way for his people that this is the life he has called us to so that he will come to have first place in everything.

He is preeminent over creation he is preeminent over the church third he is preeminent in character he is preeminent in character I told you we would go back to the first half of verse 15 and I'll encourage you to go back there now it says that he is the image of the invisible God that the word

image there means to be an exact replica replica of he is the exact replica or the exact picture of the invisible God Jesus says he who has seen me has seen the Father what he is telling us here is that if you want to know what God looks like look at Jesus he is the image of the invisible God he is exactly what God is like and not only is he exactly what God is like he is God he is preeminent in character because it says in verse 19 for it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in him now this is something that Paul was writing intentionally to the people who were believing in Gnosticism

[22 : 05] Gnosticism said that Jesus was a good guy okay there are a lot of people that tell you that Jesus was a good guy as a matter of fact every world religion acknowledges Jesus Christ every world religion acknowledges that there was a man named Jesus who was born of a woman named Mary who was born in Bethlehem and lived in Nazareth for a time who went about doing good every world religion will acknowledge that and many world religions will at least venerate him as an individual they will say he is a good prophet he was a good example he was a great teacher and that's as far as they will take it they will not say that he was the Messiah some will say that he was one of a Messiah or a type of Messiah he was one who was setting the example for Messiahs but they will not go so far only Christianity and this is why Paul says and we find out later on in Christ that he who says that Jesus kind of the testimony the litmus test for the church is whether or not you will acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the Son of God that he is God in the flesh and this is what

Paul was saying when it says it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness of deity to dwell in him many of that day were teaching that Jesus was kind of a rung on a ladder he was kind of a step down from God that he had a little bit of God in him and he kind of came and dwelt among men but he was not quite God he was just a little bit of God and man just kind of went down from there and man just got a little bit lower a little bit lower a little bit lower but the goal of man is to try to climb that ladder and to get to where Jesus was at and then just to climb a little bit further above that and to finally reach God there's a lot of effort there a lot of work that we want to be more God like what Paul is saying here when Paul says it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness of deity to dwell in him the word literally means all of God's deity dwelled in Jesus Christ it is a really unarguable irrefutable proof that Jesus is fully

God and fully man the fullness of God dwelt in the man Jesus Christ he is preeminent in character not only is he the image of God he is also fully God the fullness of God's deity dwelled inside of him and here we have the reasoning behind that so that God would do a great work in him or that God could take on flesh and complete a great work in him so he is preeminent in character no one else will ever or has ever possessed the character of Jesus Christ because he is fully man and fully God and we must acknowledge that the last thing I want you to see is the preeminent of his completed work the preeminence of his completed work verse 20 through 23 says this and through him to reconcile all things to himself so here it is here's what

God is doing in the person of Jesus Christ he is reconciling all things to himself having made peace through the blood of his cross through him I say I hope you get all the through him here because it all has to go through Jesus through him I say whether things on earth or things in heaven so first we see that his work is a work of first position first place in the cross it is through the blood of his cross through him I say his cross not just any cross it is his cross whether things on earth or things in heaven and although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind engaged in evil deeds yet he has now reconciled you in his again very intentional wording here fleshly body Paul says in the body of his flesh he was fully God and he is fully man through the death through death in order to present you before him holy and blameless and beyond reproach all I want you to see here is that he is preeminent because his work is done through his cross he has reconciled heaven and earth to God now that does not mean everybody is accepted we'll get to that in just a moment that just means that all that needs to be done to reconcile all of heaven and all of earth has already been done you don't need

Jesus plus anything okay you don't need Jesus plus baptism even though baptism is important it has a position you don't need Jesus plus good works you don't need Jesus plus a sacrifice you don't need Jesus plus Jesus has completed the task of reconciliation everything that needs to be done to bring heaven and earth back to the holy standard of God has been done on his cross and it says that he has offered that to us although you were formerly he's writing to the church here he's writing to believers alienated and hostile in mind engaged in evil deeds yet he has now past tense reconciled you in his fleshly body through death in order to present you before a lot of what I said is

deep because the preeminent position of Christ is deep but if you don't hear anything else I want you to hear this okay you put your pencils down for just a moment and just listen to me when [27 : 40] Jesus Christ died on the cross for those who have believed in him and give their life to him you are reconciled there's nothing else you need to do hope you get that you are holy you are blameless and you are presentable before a holy God all because of what he did on the cross if you never do anything else the work is done what God did in the flesh God became flesh and dwelt among men to die on a cross to reconcile man to himself we don't need Jesus plus anything all we need to be reconciled to a holy God is Jesus that's it the reason I think that's important is because Satan loves to sit on our shoulders and tell us we're not good enough to tell us we're not accepted to tell us we're not right to tell us we have problems and you know what I do I say yes you know you're right Satan I am one messed up problem filled man I stumble I trip I falter I have sin I have all these things in my life but through the work through the cross of Christ and through his fleshly body I am now going to be presented before him look this is what I have Satan I am holy and blameless and beyond reproach which means Satan you can't bring a reproach to me any longer don't tell me what I did all I have to tell you is what he has already done that changes everything everything now all of a sudden

Jesus is first and you can get out of the way because when we say but I'm not good enough I have to do this and I have to do that and I have to do this we're trying to make our self first it's not about us we need to get out of the way he did it we accept it his work is done but let's finish it up verse 23 as believers our work has just begun that does not mean we don't do hope of the gospel that you have heard which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven and of which

I Paul was made a minister his work is done our labor has just begun and our labor is just to hold fast to hold fast to prod on into faith to move forward in the faith you say well how do I hold! fast well the question is friend listen to me what has first place in your life is it self preservation is it comfort is it prosperity is it ease or is it Christ because when he is preeminent in your life it changes how you do everything in your life let's pray Lord thank you so much for allowing us together together Lord what a privilege it is Lord I pray that each of our lives would live with you in first place God I pray that in my own life Lord that these truths would take root and take over God that the preeminence of Christ would be a resounding theme Lord that you would always have your rightful place among me in every decision and every aspect and among this church for your glory but whatever it is you're saying to us I pray that we would have the ears to hear it this morning [32 : 09] God also have the willingness to respond in humble obedience and worship we love you we worship and adore you we ask it all in the sweet name of Jesus Amen Thank you.

Thank you.