

Christ Over All

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[0 : 0 0] Let's pray. Heavenly Father, would you open our hearts to hear your word this evening. In Christ's name. Amen. Well, tonight we are looking at Colossians 1, 15 to 23. This is part of a letter the Apostle Paul wrote to a small church in Colossae. Let me begin with a basic fact.

We grow or we shrink in our faith according to our view of Christ. I'll say it again. We grow or we shrink in our faith according to our view of Christ, which is why these few sentences in Colossians are so important. What we have here, I think, is probably the most majestic thing ever written about Jesus. If the scriptures were a mountain range, this would be one of the high peaks. As we mentioned last week, there were these visiting teachers. They were basically false teachers spreading heresies in the small church in Colossae. Sprinkled throughout the heresy was sort of an implicit sidelining of Jesus. They said, in order to have an authentic relationship with God, you have to do all these extra things.

The problem is by adding all these extra things, these false teachers were effectively demoting who Jesus was and what he did. Now, in our passage tonight, Paul knows all about the stuff they're saying. And instead of addressing the heresy head on, he simply shows them how magnificent Jesus is. Because when we come to see who he is, we realize there is nothing we can add to that. There is no special mystical knowledge or practices. None of that stuff is needed.

Right. With that, let's dig into what Paul specifically says. And I think he basically has three major themes here. He talks about who Christ is in relationship to God, who Christ is in relationship to creation, and who Christ is in relationship to us. So, who Christ is to God, to creation, to us. That's the basic structure of the sermon. We'll get into it. Who Christ is in relationship to God. And the answer Paul gives us is this. Christ is the son who reveals God. Verse 15. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. So, 2,000 years ago into the ancient Near East's sort of hazy notion of divine beings steps Jesus. And when they see him, they were looking at God because he is an exact visible representation of God. There is not a single part of God that is not in Jesus. So, if you want to know God, you do it through Jesus. And it's wonderful stuff. You know what? One of the wonderful things about this is that all people have opinions about God, right? So, people have, everyone has an opinion about God.

Perhaps the opinion is he doesn't exist, or he's a bit like this, or she's like that. But they're all just opinions, aren't they? The reality of Jesus and who he is means our personal view of God doesn't have to stay within the realm of opinion because we have the person of Jesus. The invisible God is made visible.

[3 : 4 5] Now, look at the second half of verse 15. Paul describes Jesus as the firstborn of all creation. This does not mean Jesus was created. It's trying to communicate something about status. The ancient world, the firstborn had all the status, had all the standing, had all the power, most of the inheritance. So, Paul is saying Jesus is equal to God the Father. So, who is Christ in relationship to God?

He is the one who reveals who God is because he is God. Now, let's keep going. Next, who is Christ in relation to creation? And Paul gives us the answer. Christ is sovereign over all of it. I read the other day that Russia has claimed Venus as a Russian planet, and I just think that's a pretty boss thing to say.

I mean, if you're going to make a claim, you can Google it. It's true. If you're going to make a claim, that's a pretty great one to make. So, now let's read verses 16 and 17 to see how that claim holds up.

Verses 16 and 17. For by him, that's Jesus, 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 holds together. So, what does this mean?

It means nothing outside, nothing exists outside of Jesus creating it. Nothing on earth exists outside of Jesus creating it. Think about all the amazing documentaries you've seen. Think about all the crazy deep sea fish and the microbes and my new favorite creature, tardigrades. I don't know if you've heard about these tardigrades. They're micro animals. They are so horridy. They are so horridy that they can live in a vacuum. They can live in space, basically. They're sending them to the moon to see how they go.

[5 : 53] Jesus made all of this stuff. Every earthly thing. But also, Paul says, nothing in the heavenlies exists outside of Jesus as creator. So, everything we know about and all the things beyond our imagination, Christ created. He is the author. He is the craftsman, and he holds it all together.

Christ is the great unifying principle. And we see it in the Gospels. He commands the winds, and he commands the storms. He feeds 5,000 people with a couple of fish. He heals. He has total authority over demons. He raises people from the dead. Creation is his to direct and govern.

And so you notice that Paul also says in the passage that all creation was made for him, for Jesus. That means he is the goal of creation. So, all of these, you know, huge existential questions we have. What's the meaning of life? Why do we exist? Why I'm here on earth? It's for King Jesus. It's all for Jesus.

Jesus. The universe has a ruler. The universe is owned. It's owned by Jesus. That includes Venus.

Jesus. I hope this is helpful to you. Sometimes, sometimes I just think we just give too little thought to this sort of thing. And we can end up thinking that, you know, Jesus, yes, Jesus was the son, son of God. But he was kind of just hanging out for eternity until God pulled him in one day and said, listen, I've got a project. You'll be in and out in 30 years. And then you can just relax again. No.

[7 : 41] Jesus was there at the beginning. He was there for all eternity and moving forward for all eternity. This is a lot to take in, isn't it? So let me give you a quick summary. Who is Christ in relationship to God? He's the one who reveals God because he is God. Who is Christ in relationship to creation?

He is the sovereign one over all of it. Those are the first two big themes. Now the last one. Paul tackles the theme of Jesus and us. What is that relationship? Let me remind you of verses 18 to 22.

He is the head of the body, the church. For in him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on heaven or on earth, making peace by the blood of the cross. And you who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, have now been reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him. Goodness, that's great news, isn't it? How does Paul relate to us? Well, he's the head of the church and he's the one who saves us. The way the passage describes it is that there is this dislocation between God and humanity. And that dislocation is resolved only because of God's initiative.

And it describes the salvation, this reconciliation is something that Christ has accomplished for us, which means peace with God does not depend on our achievement. It depends on our acceptance, our acceptance of what happened on the cross. Now, do you see what Paul is doing here?

In the first half of our passage, he says, this is Jesus. And in the second half, he says, what's Paul doing here? He is saying, as you consider who Jesus is, and what he has done for us, stick with Jesus. Stick with Jesus. It's a call to attend to your faith and stick with Jesus. And look at some of the words he uses here. They're great words. He says, make sure your faith is stable and steadfast. Make sure your faith is well grounded and stay loyal to that. Become a Christian book reader. Attend your Bible studies. Give your brain to considering the great doctrines of the church. Look at what he says here. He says, don't shift. Don't be dissuaded from what you believe. Folks, you know, there are lots of other voices and philosophies competing for your adherence. Don't shift. I've got a mate called Andrew, very clever guy, very well established in his faith, a thoughtful faith, a reasonable faith. When he went to university, this is a long, long time ago.

[11 : 08] When he first went to university, he was very, I think he might have been concerned about his faith, getting a bit beaten up, undermined by all these sort of secular ideologies. I remember after he got his degree, he was the older brother of a friend of mine. I remember sitting down for dinner with him after he had graduated. And he said to me this, he goes, he says, there's no philosophy I ever heard at university. Nothing. In all the courses that I took, nothing came close to being as robust and as intellectually satisfying as Christianity.

Folks, you have no excuse for being dissuaded from your faith. Now, why does Paul end the chapter like this? Why a call to continue in your faith? Why a call to stick with Jesus? Because as I mentioned before, these false teachers were coming in, they were demoting Jesus. And Paul knows when we're weak on Jesus, we don't stay the course. So he calls the church and he calls us to recognize afresh the supremacy of Christ. And he reminds us, because he is the supreme Lord. He is the sufficient savior.

Now, do you live with that kind of assurance? Do you live with that kind of conviction? Do you live with that kind of confidence in your salvation? No. If the answer is no, it's because you haven't fully grasped who Jesus is.

It could also be spiritual laziness. It could also be you're too focused on your own moral achievements and not what God has accomplished on the cross. Folks, I'm going to finish up here.

Take this glorious passage away. Read it over and over again. Memorize it. Get it into your bones. It is the best thing you can know.

[13 : 18] It is the best thing you can know.