

## COMPLETE IN HIM

Reading: Colossians 1:14-23

### 4. THE PRE-EMINENCE OF CHRIST

There was a medical missionary in China. Whenever someone came to him for treatment he would always tell them the story of the Lord Jesus. One morning, before the clinic doors were opened, there came to the missionary an old woman stooped with age. He could tell by the dust on her feet and clothing that she had come a long way. That morning he treated her and as always, told her about the Lord Jesus. The medical missionary said, “*As the rose opens to receive the rays of the noon day sun, so her heart opened to receive the Savior. Her tears made little rivers down her dusty cheeks as she opened her heart to Jesus Christ.*” Several weeks later, there was a knock at the missionary's door. When he opened the door, he found the same old woman that had come to him several weeks before.

She said, “*Sir, He has saved me and I know He lives in my heart. He has made my life so happy. But sir, I have forgotten His name. Could you please tell me his name again?*” The missionary repeated over and over again the name, “*Jesus,*” and each time the little old lady echoed that name, “*Jesus.*” Lela Long heard the story and wrote these words,

*There have been names that I loved to hear,  
But never has there been a name so dear  
To this heart of mine, as the name divine,  
The precious, precious, name of Jesus.  
Jesus is the sweetest name I know,  
And he's just the same, as His lovely name.  
And that's the reason why I love Him so,  
For Jesus is the sweetest name I know*

But if I were to ask you this .... who do you think Jesus Christ is ? I wonder how you would respond ? One thing is certain, as one studies the pages of the Word of God there is only one conclusion that can be drawn. It is a Book that is all about Him. Many contend that the Bible is only a book of history. While that is the truth, it is not the whole truth. It is a book of history, because it is ***His-story***. It's all about Him. Certain native Christians used to call it the “*Jesus Book,*” a beautiful assessment of its contents. For,

1. In the Old Testament: we have Preparation: for His coming.
2. In the Gospels: we have Presentation: He has come, here He is:
3. In the Acts: we have Proclamation: the message of the gospel of His grace.
4. In the Epistles we have Personification: “*For to me to live is Christ.*”
5. In the Revelation: we have Predomination, the Lamb on the throne.

Yes, the whole book is fundamentally about Him. But of all the Bible's teaching about the Lord Jesus none is

more significant than ( Col Ch 1 ) You see, much of the heresy threatening the Colossian church centered on the person of Christ. The heretics denying His humanity viewed Christ as one of many lesser descending spirit beings that emanated from God. Still again, the idea that God Himself could become man was absurd to them, therefore they also denied His deity. They also said that Christ was not adequate for salvation. Salvation required a superior, mystical, secret knowledge beyond that of the gospel. Faced with this situation, the apostle Paul had one answer, and that was *the Pre-eminence of Christ*, and over and over again in this chapter and right throughout this epistle, he emphasises the Pre-eminence of the Lord Jesus, so as to give Him His rightful place as Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

My .... the more I study Paul's approach to this particular problem, the more I am convinced that the answer to your life, and the answer to my life, and the answer to the life of the church, local and universal is a recognition afresh and anew of the Pre-eminence of the Lord Jesus Christ ! It should be our constant prayer " *That in all things He might have the Pre-eminence.* " Notice firstly,

### **(1) THE PRE-EMINENCE OF HIS PERSON**

It's important to start here, for wrong views about the Lord Jesus will mean wrong views about everything else in the universe. Now Paul makes two tremendous statements about the Lord Jesus. He tells us, that

#### **(a) JESUS CHRIST IS ESSENTIALLY GOD:**

" *Who is the image of the invisible God.*" ( 1:15 ) The word " *image*," is the Greek word " *eikon*," from which we derive our English word " *icon*." This means that Jesus Christ is the exact reproduction and revelation of God. Do we wish to know what God is like ? We may so do for " *he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father*," ( Jn 14:9 ) said our Lord Jesus. Later on in this epistle Paul says, " *In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*" ( 2:9 ) He is the manifestation of the Divine attributes and the embodiment of the Divine essence. Is this not the thought that the writer to the Hebrews expressed when he declared that Jesus Christ was " *the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person.*" The word " *image*," here spoke of the imprint left by a seal or die on wax. Before the incarnation, or the birth of Christ, no man could see God at any time. The imagination could only wonder what God would look like. However, God wrapped Himself up in human form, in the person of His Son, and gave us representation, and exact replica of Himself.

I think of a pre-school teacher who told everyone to draw a picture of what was important to them. In the back of the room, little Johnny began to labor over his drawing. Everyone finished, and handed in their picture, but Johnny just kept drawing. The teacher graciously walked back and put her arm around Johnny's shoulder, and said, " *Johnny, it's time to hand your drawing in.*" Little Johnny didn't flinch, he just kept drawing. The teacher asked him, " *What are you drawing ?*" Johnny replied, " *I am drawing God.*"

The teacher said, “ *Johnny, no one knows what God looks like.* ” Johnny replied, “ *They will when I get done.* ” My .... in the Lord Jesus we see what God looks like. The lines of Deity have been reproduced in Christ’s humanity. So to find out what God is like we need only to look at Christ, and to find out what Christianity is like we need only to look at Christians for if Christ is the image of the Father, Christians are to be the image of the Son. ( Rom 8:29 ) My .... we have Deformed by sin, Transformed by grace, but we are to be Conformed to Christ. Yes, one day we shall be like Him, for “ *we shall see Him as He is,* ” ( 1 Jn 3:2 ) but in the meantime we are to seek through obedience to the Word and to the Spirit a growing likeness down here. My .... if Christ is like the Father are you like Christ ? Are you allowing the Holy Spirit to do in you what He wants to do, to be in you what He wants to be, so that Christ is seen, heard, and felt in your life ? (a)

### **(b) JESUS CHRIST IS ETERNALLY GOD:**

“ *the firstborn of every creature,* ” ( 1:15 ) Now its here that we come to the eye of the storm that has raged around the person of Christ since the days of the Nicean Council of 325 A.D. You see, many mistakenly take this term to infer that Christ was a creature rather than Creator. From the Arians, of the early church, to the Jehovah Witnesses, of our own day, those who deny the deity of Christ have sought support from this phrase. They argue that it speaks of Christ as a created being, and thus He could not be the eternal God. However, such an argument distorts the entire context of this passage. Indeed ( 1:16 ) tells us that the Lord

Jesus is the Creator and not a creature. How then could Christ Himself be a created being ? Still again, in ( 1:17 Paul says “ *And he is before all things.* ” Christ existed before anything else was created ( Micah 5:2 ) And only God existed before the creation. You see the term

“ *firstborn,* ” does not refer to time but to place or status. “ *Firstborn,* ” simply means “ *of first importance, of first rank.* ” Solomon was certainly not born first of all of David’s sons yet he was named the firstborn. ( Ps 89:27 ) “ *The firstborn of every creature,* ” simply means “ *prior to all creation.* ” My .... Jesus Christ is not a created being, as Arius and many of the cults teach, He is eternal God. I love John’s wording of it, “ *In the beginning was the Word ....,* ”

( Jn 1:1 ) The verb John uses takes us into the sphere of the timeless. In other words the Word belongs to a realm where time does not matter. The Word did not have a beginning. The Word will never have an ending. The Word belongs to eternity.

My .... is this not where we must being when we think of the Lord Jesus ? We must think of Christ as never having begun at all. He is eternally God.  
“ Thou art the everlasting Word ....,” (1)

## **(2) THE PRE-EMINENCE OF HIS POWER**

This is Christ’s relation to Creation. You see, our wonderful Saviour,

### **(a) CREATES ALL THINGS:**

Did you notice ( 1:16 ) " *For by Him were all things created.*" ( 1:16 ) **1. In heaven:** angels and cherubim, the invisible. Galaxies, stars, planets, and moons, the visible. **2. In earth:** animals and rocks, oceans and rivers, clouds and mountains. **3. In governments:** ranks of spiritual beings, " *thrones, dominions, principalities and powers...*" ( Eph. 6:12; 2:15 ) Again, this was an area that was attacked, and assaulted by the false teachers at Colosse. They viewed Jesus Christ as the first and most important of the emanations from God. God, but they were convinced it had to be a lesser being, much further down the chain, who eventually created the material universe as we know it. But Paul rejects that blasphemy insisting that by Him all things were created.

My .... have you ever paused to consider the vastness of our universe? For example, we are told that the sun has a diameter of 864,000 miles, one hundred times that of earth's. It could hold 1.3 million planets the size of earth in it. It takes sunlight, traveling at 186,000 miles per second, about 8.5 minutes to reach earth. Yet that same light would take more than 4 years to reach the nearest star, Alpha Centuri, some 24 trillion miles away from Earth. The galaxy to which our sun belongs, the Milky Way, contains hundreds of billions of stars. And, astronomers estimate there are millions, even billions of galaxies. What they can see leads them to estimate the number of stars in the universe as roughly the number of all the grains of sand on all of the world's beaches. *Now isn't that something ?* The Lord Jesus is the Creator of this Universe! Your Saviour put

it all together. Now tell me, if Christ is the Creator of the Universe do you think He is powerful enough to handle your problem, your crisis this .... ? Are you facing a crisis at home, in business? Does there seem to be no way out ? My .... your Saviour is the Creator of the Universe and " *nothing is too hard ....*" ( Jer 32:17 )

### **(b) CLAIMS ALL THINGS:**

If we ask why the Lord created all things, the answer is found in ( 1:16 ) " *And for him.*" Warren Wiersbe says,

" *Jesus Christ is the Sphere in which all things exist, the Agent by which they came into being, and the One for whom all things were made.*" As John Calvin says, " *Creation is the theatre of His glory.*" ( Rev 4:11 )

### **(c) CONTROLS ALL THINGS:**

For its " *by him all things consist,*" or " *hold together.*"

( 1:17 ) Can you imagine what would happen if the Lord Jesus relinquished His sustaining power to the laws of the universe ? I mean the sun has a surface temperature of twelve thousand degrees Fahrenheit. If it were any closer to earth we would burn, and if it were any further we would freeze. Our globe is tilted on an exact angle of 23 degrees, which enables us to have four seasons. If it weren't tilted vapours from the ocean would move north and south, eventually piling up continents of ice. If the moon did not remain at a specific distance from the earth, the ocean tide would

completely inundate the land twice a day. Do you know the reason this universe is a cosmos and not chaos is because of the upholding power of Christ. But does this not affect our personal life ? Paul says, “ *He who begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.* ” ( Phil 1:6 )

My .... when Christ begins a work in the heart He does not end there. He upholds, He sustains, and He keeps. Are you doubting the ability of Christ to keep you ? Oh, He is able to keep you from falling. ( Jude 24 ) He is able to make all grace abound toward you. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above that we ask or think.

### **(3) THE PRE-EMIENICE OF HIS POSITION**

You see, having stated Christ’s relation to the Father, and His relation to creation Paul now sets forth His relation to the church. Do you see here,

#### ***(a) CHRIST’S SUPREMACY:***

“ *And he is the head of the body the church,* ” ( 1:18 ) The word “ *head,* ” gives the sense of origin and source as well as leader and ruler. When Ronald Regan was president of the U.S.A. he appointed Dr. Everett Koop, a committed Christian as the Surgeon General. Dr. Koop was the first man to separate Siamese twins successfully. You know a body with two heads would be a freak of nature. My .... God gave His Son to be the Head of the church which is His body, and Christ is the Sole and Only Head of His Church. And just as my head ( brain ) controls my body so Christ is in control of His body, the church. *Wouldn't it be wonderful if*

*every member was in subjection to the Head.* You would never have a split, you would never have any shame on your church, you would never have members not speaking to each other. You would never have just a handful saints at the prayer meeting. You would never be pleading with believers for commitment to the work of God. Every member would be sensitive to the Head of the Church. Obeying His Word, seeking His face, and exalting His name. But notice that in relation to the church, the Lord Jesus, “ *is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,* ” that’s

#### ***(b) CHRIST’S SOVEREIGNTY:***

Not that He was the first to be raised from the dead, for He was not. But He is the most important of all who have been raised from the dead, for without His resurrection there could be no resurrection for others. My .... He is the first fruits of the resurrection. Paul says, “ *But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept.* ” ( 1 Cor 15:20 ) The first-fruits is an assurance of a harvest that will follow later on. The Lord Jesus says, “ *Because I live ye shall live also.* ” ( Jn 14:9 ) And because “ *He lives I can face tomorrow.* ” (a) (b)

#### ***(c) CHRIST’S SUFFICIENCY:***

“ *For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.* ” ( 1:19 ) My .... there is nothing that can be added to Jesus Christ to make Him a “ *better,* ” or a “ *greater,* ” Saviour. The Greek word translated

“fullness,” ( *pleroma* ) was one of the words the false teachers at Colosse used. It meant “ *the sum total of all the divine power and attributes.* ” My .... do you see what Paul is saying ? He is saying there is nothing lacking in Christ because the fullness of deity, power and grace are His. Today there are many voices which tell us we need something **more** than Jesus Christ, some more exciting experience. Others propose that we can do with something **less** than Jesus Christ, saying all ways leads to God. And many preach something or someone **other** than Jesus Christ. But Paul tells us that Christ has no rival. He needs no supplement. He is not deficient at any point and to our joy we discover that “ *of his fullness, have all we received and grace for grace.* ” ( Jn 1:16 ) All the fullness of Christ becomes available to us. Now I just wonder, have you become indifferent to the centrality and supremacy of the Lord Jesus ? Listen, He is Pre-eminent in (1) (2) (3)

#### (4) THE PRE-EMINENCE OF HIS PASSION

For here Paul takes us to the cross and shows us that the reconciliation made by the Lord Jesus at Calvary removes the enmity and restores harmony between God and sinners. Paul says,

##### (a) *Look at your Past: You were Ruined:*

Could any words describe more graphically the appalling condition of sinners ? “ *alienated, enemies, wicked works.* ” Is that you this .... ?

##### (b) *Look at your Present: You are Reconciled:*

The “ *sometime,* ” of ( 1:21 ) is replaced by the “ *yet now,* ” of ( 1:22 ) It is we who were enemies. It is God who reconciles. My .... are you impressed with the wonder of His death ? We scarcely need to go beyond this chapter alone. For do you see what we have through the Cross ? Through the Cross we have

##### **Redemption:**

“ *In whom we have redemption through His blood,* ”

( 1:14 ) Through the Cross we have **Forgiveness:**

“ *even the forgiveness of sins,* ” ( 1:14 ) Through the Cross we have **Peace:** “ *Having made peace through the blood of His cross,* ” ( 1:20 ) and through the Cross we have **Reconciliation:** ( 1:21-22 ) My .... do you know these benefits of the Cross ? Redemption, forgiveness, peace, reconciliation ? My Christian .... do you appreciate the work that Christ accomplished on the cross ? Is this why you stay for the Lord’s Table ? Is this what you motivates you in Christian service ? World Mission was the heart motive of Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. When he was sixteen years of age his family had great plans for him to enter upon a diplomatic career.

He was sent to study law at the University of Wittenburg. After he qualified he visited Dusseldorf. At the public gallery he was confronted with Stenburg’s famous and telling picture of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. As he gazed at the masterpiece he was captivated in his soul and challenged by the inscription underneath which read, “ *All this I did for thee, What hast thou done for me ?* ” Overcome by love for the Saviour and a deep debt of gratitude he

resolved in his heart to serve the Saviour with all that he had. His life's motto was

*"I have but one passion, and that is He and only He."*

My .... does His cross motivate you ? As you consider Christ this .... will it move you ? (a) (b)

***(c) Look at your Future: You will be Resplendent:***

For present acceptance will be followed by future perfection. That perfection will consist of being holy, unblameable, faultless, unproveable. Those against whom no charge can be laid. My .... is this not the ultimate purpose of our redemption ? And my .... it's all down to Him. (1) (2) (3) (4) When Christians say, ***"Christ is a big part of my life,"*** they reveal Christ is not pre-eminent in their life. He doesn't want to be simply a part of your life. He wants to be pre-eminent number one in your life. Is Christ pre-eminent in your daily life ? Can you say with John the Baptist, *"He must increase, but I must decrease,"* ( Jn 3:31 )

**Pre-eminent in our Worship:**

**Pre-eminent in our Stewardship:**

**Pre-eminent in our Fellowship:**

John Newton was a rough, dirty sailor with a foul mouth and an appetite for rotten living. He hated life and life hated him. He was captain of a slave ship. Then someone placed in his hands a copy of Thomas a Kempis' *"The Imitation of Christ."* He also had the gift of a good mother who told him about the Savior when he was young. And then he was saved. He went all over England sharing his faith. Well past his

*"retirement,"* age, he had to have an assistant stand in the pulpit with him on Sundays. He was nearly blind and spoke in whispers, but nothing could keep him from preaching while he still had breath. One Sunday, while delivering his message he repeated the sentence, *"Jesus Christ is precious."* His helper whispered to him, *"But you have already said that twice."*

Newton turned to his helper and said loudly, *"Yes, I've said it twice, and I'm going to say it again."* The stones in the ancient sanctuary fairly shook as the grand old preacher said again, *"Jesus Christ is precious."* Is Jesus Christ precious to your life ? Is Jesus Christ prevailing over your life ? Is Jesus Christ pre-eminent in your life ? ? Over one hundred years ago C.T. Studd played cricket for England and was heir to his father's fortune. However, like Zinzendorf, he was caught up with a passion for Christ and the lost. He forsook position and wealth to serve the Lord in China, India, and the heart of Africa where he died in 1931. It was Studd who penned these words, *"If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him."* ***That in all things He might have the pre-eminence."*** ***And He Must have it, and He Will have it, and He shall have it."*** My constant prayer for this church is *"That in all things .... pre-eminence."* Outside Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, there is a bronze open book, inscribed in that book are the words of Robert G. Lee.

**Jesus Christ, Son of Man without sin, Son of God with power, Literature's loftiest ideal, Philosophy's highest personality, Criticism's supremist problem,**

**Theology's fundamental doctrine. Christianity's cardinal necessity. He is Heaven's bread for earth's hungry, Heaven's water for earth's thirst, Heaven's glory for earth's shame, Heaven's grace for earth's guilt, Heaven's hope for earth's despair, Heaven's love for earth's hate, Heaven's peace for earth's strife, Heaven's forgiveness for earth's sins, Heaven's life for earth's death. “*That in all things he might have the pre-eminence.*”**