



The Sermon

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Colossians 1:15-20

"By Him, Through Him, & For Him"

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TRANSCRIPT

I'd like to ask you to pray with me, if you would, and then we will read from Colossians chapter 1.

[Prayer] Our Father, we are thankful today for the privilege of being here in Your house. This is Your day. We've come to worship Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And I pray that You would strengthen me with the clarity of thought and mind to teach these lofty words. The verses we consider today are of such great importance, I pray that I would in no way be a stumbling block to someone understanding these words; but instead, You would allow my words to simply help these dear people to be able to more clearly understand Your Word. We ask in the name of Your Son, our Savior, the Lord Jesus. Amen. [End]

You know, there are some things in life it's okay to be wrong about. An example would be, "Are you a Sooner or, I don't know, a Baylor Bear or something?" I mean, the answer is Sooners, right? We know that. Where I live, Sooners are Cowboys. I mean, everybody gets it; it's Sooners, we know that. But you can be wrong about that. If you want to be an Aggie, if you want to be a Longhorn, I guess, it's all right.

But there is something in life you cannot afford to be wrong on. There is something that's not a matter of opinion or a matter of preference. There is

something that you just can't afford to be wrong on that impacts not just every part about your life today, but truly and literally for all eternity. You can't be wrong about Christ. You cannot afford to be wrong about Christ. We need to understand who Jesus is as revealed to us in the pages of the Bible, and worship the true, living,, ruling reigning Christ.

We come today to one of the most lofty of passages that help us to understand more clearly who Jesus is. Look at it with me in Colossians 1:15. It says, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation: 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. And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent. For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross."

Friends, you can't be wrong about Jesus; we've got to be clear on this. And it's critically important, because in the world in which you and I live today there's a lot of talk about Jesus. There's actually people who will dedicate their life to false religions, who will preach and believe a wrong, unbiblical Jesus. And so we've got to be clear. When we talk about salvation, we're talking about salvation through Christ alone; and when we talk about Christ, we're talking about the Christ as revealed to us in the pages of Scripture; not a Christ invented by man, not a Christ invented by some religion; the Christ that is made known to us, that was born of a virgin, that lived a sinless life, that died on the cross, that was laid in a borrowed tomb, on the third day was raised back to life, has ascended to heaven, and is one day coming back again. We must not be wrong about Jesus.

Now as you've come to understand by this point in the early days of your congregation walking through the letter of Colossians, we must remember the context. And the context behind the writing of this letter is you've got this issue, as you know by now, this mix of Greek mysticism and Jewish legalism that eventually became known as Gnosticism, what we would refer

to today as the Colossian heresy; and so this letter written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to refute that heresy. It was a group that claimed to know more than everybody else. It was a group that believed God was good, but that physical matter was evil. And if that's the case, then God can't directly create the world, because the world is matter, it's evil. And so what they believed in part is that God sent out these emanations, these kind of sub gods, and that's how the world was created.

There was eventually one emanation that went out from God so far removed down the line that that emanation didn't really even know God, and that's how the creative world came into order. They held that Jesus was one of these emanations without a physical body, so they denied both a perfect deity of Christ and the true humanity of Christ; and while they may mention His name, they do not know the true, biblical Jesus.

And so I'll say again, you cannot afford to be wrong on Jesus. And what this letter is that you're walking through is this refutation of that heresy, and it all comes down to, "Who is Jesus? Do you know Him? Do you love Him?" not a figure that your imagination has come up with, not a Jesus that is anything less than the Jesus revealed to us in Scripture. And the words that we read just a moment ago here from Colossians 1 remind us of the greatness of Christ: "By Him, through Him, and for Him are all things."

Let's look at this passage with three headings that I pray will direct your attention toward the greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Number one, "Christ's sovereignty is demonstrated in His authority over all creation. Christ's sovereignty is demonstrated in His authority over all creation." We see that here in verse 15, "He is the image of the invisible God." The word "image" is the word "icon." It's a representation. If that representation is perfect enough, that word can mean a manifestation, which is what we see here, that He is the very image of the invisible God.

We see in Hebrews 1:3 where it says, "He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power." This is who Christ is. It's His authority over all creation that

we need to recognize. John 1:14, "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." He said in John 14:9, "Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father." It's His authority over all creation that we first draw our attention to.

And it says at the end of that verse that "He is the firstborn of all creation." It's a very important word - *prótotokos* is the word in the original text - and that word can be used a couple of different ways. It can mean chronology, the first in a sense of chronology. It can also mean a special status or a special rank where we might use the word "preeminence." And we see it used both ways in the Scripture, and the context helps us to understand what is in view.

And so it will say in Luke 2:7 that "Christ is the firstborn of His siblings." He's the oldest, He's the first one chronologically. But the word is also used not to refer to chronology, it's also used to refer to a special authority, or a special rank, or special status, as I mentioned. We see it used that way in Exodus 4. We see it used that way in Jeremiah 31. We see it used that way in Psalm 89. It was normative in both the Jewish culture and Greek culture to use that in that way.

So He is the image, the icon of the invisible God, and He is the firstborn of all creation. We know this doesn't mean He was created. We have to be careful here, because there are all kinds of false beliefs that are out there that would teach that Jesus was created, when we know that's not what it means, one, by the language that's used here; also because it goes right on in verse 16 to say, "For by Him all things were created." He's not created, He's the Creator.

Why does it say He's the firstborn? Well, it's saying He is the preeminent One He alone has this status, this authority. He alone has this position of being over all things. "And by Him all things were created," - verse 16 says - "in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible." This is the same

thing the Bible says in John 1:3 that "all things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."

So, what's the point? Remember the context of why this letter is being written in the first place. In part, what is happening is He is correcting and refuting this heresy. He's correcting this viewpoint that came to be known as Gnosticism. And so, remember, their thought was that because matter is evil, it's created by some emanation from God; and Scripture says, "No, creation came into existence through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ." He has authority over all creation.

The Gnostics denied His humanity and His perfect deity. And so he'll say in verse 22, "He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death." You and I read that and think, "Will we get it?" But understand the context. He's making very clear who Jesus is. He is eternal God, yes; He also was God made flesh. He is correcting all kinds of false theology in just a few words that are used very, very purposefully.

Verse 16, "By Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities." I think here this is a reference to various ranks in the spiritual realm. But I would just say this: you need not get too hung up on exactly the distinction between the thrones, the dominions, the rules, and the authorities, because the whole point of it is whoever, whatever they are, Christ is over all of them. That's the point. Christ is preeminent over all things. As the one who created all things, He is over all things. As the one who spoke everything into existence, He is the preeminent One over all that He has made; and all things, visible and invisible, physical realm and spiritual realm, all must submit to Him. And so he says in verse 17, "All things were created through Him and for Him."

Now what Paul is doing under inspiration the Holy Spirit is not only giving us great theology. Not only is he helping what some believe was a song of the early church in helping them to understand what this means. He also is engaging the Greek philosophers of the day right at their point of need. So

they would have held that there was for all things what they would call a primary cause, an instrumental cause, and a final cause, meaning that everything has to have power, a plan, and purpose. And what Scripture tells us is that Jesus Christ Himself is the primary cause, because He's the one that created; He Himself is the instrumental cause, as He's the one who produced it; and He Himself is that final cause, because all things were made for His glory. And what Paul is doing here is helping you to make sure that you do not get wrong who Jesus is.

If you go out on the streets of Dallas and ask people, "Do you believe in Jesus?" you'll have a lot of people that would affirm, "Sure, I believe in Him." But you must ask the question, "Which Jesus: the Jesus of the cults, the Jesus of the Gnostics, the Jesus of your own imagination?" So you hear people say things like, "My Jesus would never do that." Or you hear about judgment and hell, "Well, my Jesus would never do that." Well, the issue, my friends, with all due respect, is never about your Jesus, it is about the Jesus; that's what matters. That is what your eternity hinges on: "What will you do with the true, biblical Jesus?"

And so we live in a day where people want to toss around phrases like, "My truth. I'm going to live my truth," and, "You have to live your truth." And I just want to say with gentleness and with respect, but also with clarity, your truth does not matter, it doesn't. "The truth" matters. Well, where would we go to find out the truth? You would go to Jesus Christ, who Himself declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; and nobody comes to the Father except through Him." I say again, you cannot afford to be wrong about Jesus.

Romans 11:36 tells us, "For from Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever." So what's being said in verses 15 and 16 is that "all things are made through Him," – that is to say Christ is the source – "and all things were made for Him," – that is to say He is the purpose, which means you were made by Him, and you were made for Him. That means that your life has meaning, your life has value; you were made in His image. And no matter what somebody else thinks about you, and no

matter what even you may think about yourself, you were made in the image of God. Your life has value.

But please also hear that not only were you made by Him, you were made for Him. You exist to bring glory to Him, which means that if you buy into the lies of the world that you live this life for a few decades, and the purpose and the goal is for you to make a name for yourself, you've missed the very reason for which you've been created. You were not created to make a name for yourself, you were created to bring glory to His name, because by Him and through Him and for Him are all things. You exist for Him. Never forget that.

In about ten days my wife and I will celebrate our 27th wedding anniversary. And outside of my salvation, I have no greater gift than to have been the husband of Marcy for these 27 years. Outside of Jesus I have no relationship that means more to me than her. It has been the absolute honor of my life to live with her, to sit by her, to walk through life with her, to rejoice with her, to grieve with her. There is nothing in my life outside of Christ that brings me more joy and more satisfaction, or is a gift more meaningful to me than her.

But after being married 27 years, let me be very clear on this: our marriage is not ultimately about our happiness, it's about Christ's, because our marriage is a gift from Him and for Him. So if you're married, no matter how long you may be married, never forget: ultimately, your marriage is not about your happiness – though, I hope you're happily married, it sure beats the alternative. But that's not the ultimate point of your marriage. The ultimate point of your marriage is the glory of Jesus. And if you're single, the ultimate purpose of your life is the glory of Jesus.

And if you're young and strong and healthy and doing well, the purpose of your life is the glory of Christ; and when your body at some point begins to give way and you're drawing your final breaths, the purpose of your life is completely unchanged, because you were created by Him and for Him. So whether we live or whether we die, we belong to the Lord; for He has

created us, and we exist by Him, through Him; and forever and always for all eternity as believers, it will be our greatest delight to exist for Him. You can't afford to be wrong about Jesus; it not only impacts everything to do with your eternity, it impacts every decision you make today.

Christ's sovereignty is demonstrated in His authority over creation. But we see, secondly, in verse 18, that "Christ's supremacy is displayed in His authority over the church," not only His authority over creation, but also His authority over the church. Look at verse 18: "And He is the head of the body, the church." He's the head; He controls it, He leads it. We know that every biblical assembly, every biblical church, though there may be some differences, every biblical church would have these things in common: Christ is the head, you have elders who lead people to Christ, and you have deacons who serve the body, and you have church members who use their spiritual gifts to be a blessing to the body.

And there's a lot of different ways churches may do certain things, but these things we know. How do we know them? Because it's exactly what the Bible has called us to. And so that's important, because we need to remind ourselves that the head of the church is Christ. He leads it. He controls it. And if this ever gets messed up, if we ever forget that Christ is the head of the church, then that local assembly is in real trouble. And it may be tempting to think, "Well, we don't even need to dwell on that here, because after all, this is a very biblical church, the Lord is obviously blessing this congregation, so let's just skip past this."

But, no, no, no; don't be quick to skip past this, because one of the great blessings of being a part of this church is the Lord is bringing so many people here and so many families here, and it's a wonderful thing; but never forget the foundation of this and every other true biblical church, and it is this: Christ is the head of this church. Never forget that. I've been blessed to serve where I do for 23 years; I'm not the head of that church. And if the Lord gives me 23 more years there, I still won't be the head of the church, because the head of the church is not something that's up for vote. Christ is the head of the church, not a man, not a group of men; Christ is the head.



He goes on to say in verse 18, not only is He the head of the church, it says, "He is the beginning." The word is *arché*. It carries with it the idea of the source and primacy. In other words, Christ is the originator and has the highest rank in the church. He has established the church, He builds the church, and He is forever the highest ranking factor in that church. He doesn't just start the church and then step out, He doesn't just establish the church and then hand it over, He establishes the church as its source, and He is the head of that church as the preeminent One. Never forget that.

It doesn't matter how large this church grows, there's just one head, and His name is Jesus Christ. It doesn't matter how many ministries the Lord allows this church to be a part of, there's only one head, and it's the Lord Jesus Christ. And if any church ever misses that, if any church is ever wrong on who Jesus is in His authority over the church, they have ceased to be a true church. And so Paul wants to make sure that people are clear on who Jesus is, but he also wants to make sure the church is clear on who Jesus is. Yes, He's got complete authority over creation, but also complete sovereign rule over the church.

Back to verse 18: "He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead." There's that word again, the "firstborn." So we have to ask ourselves, "In which sense did Paul mean it this time? Does He mean firstborn chronologically as it's sometimes used, or does it mean firstborn in terms of rank and status and preeminence as it sometimes used?"

Well, Jesus is the firstborn from the dead. Well, in one sense, He's not the first person chronologically to be raised from the dead. We know that, because Jesus Himself raised from the dead. Jesus speaks, "Lazarus, come forth," and Lazarus comes back to life. Jesus goes to the house of Jairus the synagogue leader and takes his little daughter by the hand and says, "*Talitha koum*," translated meaning, "Little lamb, I say to you, arise," and she goes from death back to life. So in that sense, Jesus is not chronologically the first person brought back to life, though He is the preeminent One, the highest ranking one that has ever been brought back to life.

But in another sense, there is something unique about the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus has resurrected unto a glorified body; that's not happened before. When Jesus restores life to Jairus' daughter, it's a wonderful, beautiful miracle; but her body is not a glorified body, it will one day break down and die again. When Jesus brings Lazarus back to life, it's a wonderful miracle for Lazarus, and a wonderful demonstration of the power and deity of Christ; but his body will one day wear down again and will die again; and in that sense, the kind of resurrection Jesus had unto a glorified state is not only the preeminent kind, it is also the first of its kind.

So I think you can take it in both ways in that context: He is the beginning, the source and the purpose, and He is the firstborn from the dead, like Revelation 1:5 says, "Grace to you and peace from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead," which seems a bit strange. If you just think about here in Colossians 1 and in Revelation 1, every time I read it, it always strikes me just how close these two terms are: the firstborn and the dead.

We typically don't think of the one who is born as dead, we typically don't think of one who is dead as being alive, and yet I think what is being said here is, as one author mentioned it, that the tomb of Jesus was a womb from which Christ came forth in victory: His death unto life; His resurrection, the tomb became a womb where Christ came forth in absolute victory. So when you say, "Who is Jesus?" here's who Jesus is. He's the eternal Son of God uncreated who did the creation. "All things were made by Him, through Him, and for Him." He lived a perfect life. He died in our place, taking upon Himself the wrath of God as a payment for our sin, was laid in the tomb, and on the third day raised back to life unto His glorified body; and He is coming again. He is the first fruits for all of us. He is the firstborn from the dead, the first of its kind, and also the preeminent One over all that will one day take place.

We know that because of Philippians 3:20, "Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself." Don't miss this, brothers and sisters.

If you're in Christ, one day you will be glorified; and when you are, this lowly body we have today will be transformed unto a body like His. But even in that day, Philippians reminds us in verse 21 there of chapter 3, even in that day, "all things will be subject to Him." Meaning what? Meaning the greatest part of heaven is not your glorified body. The greatest part of heaven is not that you're reunited with your loved ones. That's a wonderful thing, that's a wonderful promise and blessing; it's not the greatest part of heaven. The greatest part of heaven is Christ, because even as you are glorified, all things are subject to Jesus, meaning even your glorified state is still for Him.

Don't miss that. If you miss that, you totally misunderstand heaven. If you give me somebody off the streets of Dallas and they do not know Jesus, they don't believe in Jesus, they don't care about the Word of God, they don't believe the Word of God, but I ask them, "Do you want when you die to go to a place of peace and comfort and joy, where there's no death and no crime and no shootings and no cancer and no tornadoes? Do you want that when you die?" What will they say? "Of course." Of course they do.

If I were to say to some on the streets of Dallas when they do not believe in Christ, if I were to say to them, "When you die, had you rather go to a place of perfect paradise or judgment?" well they're going to obviously choose the same one that you would. And yet, if you go to the funeral of somebody who does not believe in Jesus, nearly every time you'll hear someone talk about how they're in a better place, or they may even mention being in heaven. And you have to understand that one of the great tests of whether somebody truly loves Jesus is this: if you got heaven when you died and you had no sin, no sorrow, no death, no pain, no disease, but no Jesus, would you be happy there? If you had the absence of all the pain in this world, but no Jesus, every unbeliever says, "Sure," because that's how the unconverted mind thinks.

How can you know if you belong to Christ? Well, what makes heaven heaven for you? To be sure, it's going to be a wonderful thing to be reunited with the saints of old. I can't wait to meet them. It's going to be wonderful to see our loved ones who were in Christ again. It's going to be wonderful

to see friends who love Jesus who had preceded us in death. It's going to be wonderful to really live and really exist without sickness and disease. Those are going to be wonderful things. But it's Christ that makes heaven heaven. And even in your glorified state, your glorified state is still subject to Christ, because even in your glorified state you still exist for Christ. And if you don't understand that, then you've missed the biblical Jesus; and if you don't understand that, you've missed the purpose for which you're breathing this very moment.

In fact, look at the very end of verse 17: "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." That includes you. Even if you're here today as an unbeliever, the only thing holding you together and separating you from death and judgment is the grace of Christ, not saving grace; that's a different story. But the only thing holding you together, the only thing even giving you breath to prolong your rejection of Christ is Christ.

But don't mistake His patience as His indifference. If you're here today and you've never repented of your sin and called upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only thing holding you together is Christ. And the only reason why you even woke up this morning with one more day is Christ. And the only reason why you're hearing the gospel preached to you one more time is the common grace of Jesus Christ. And I beg you: don't be wrong on Jesus. He is sovereign over creation. He is sovereign over His church. It ends in verse 18, "that in everything He might be preeminent." He's the ruler. He's the source. He's the power. He's the authority over creation and the church.

We see Christ's sovereignty demonstrated in His authority over all creation. We see Christ's supremacy displayed in His authority over the church. Let me show you one final thing: "Christ's sufficiency that's declared in His authority over the consummation of all things. Christ's sufficiency that's declared in His authority over the consummation of all things." In other words, where's all this going? Where's all this headed?

I mean, you come to church, and you sing, and you read the Word, and you fellowship, and you enjoy these moments. You go home to your family this afternoon; you enjoy your time with your family, with your friends. You go to work tomorrow, you go to school tomorrow, you live in a fallen world tomorrow, and you are going to be inundated with news that is heartbreaking. We saw it just yesterday. Where's all this heading? What happens at the end? How do we see Christ's supremacy over the consummation of all things? Verse 19, "For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell."

Now let me remind you of something critically important. While it's true, we can take verses 15-20 and we could just deal with them on their own, and we would see great truth about Jesus and have all the reason the world to glorify Christ; that's true. But one of the reasons why your church here, my church in Oklahoma why we walk through books of the Bible verse by verse, word by word, one, is because that's the way the Holy Spirit gave it to us; two, is it's the best way to understand the entire argument of a book. So verses 15-20, powerful as they are, they're not there in a vacuum; they are actually the answer, the response to what you just studied last week.

So go back with me to verse 11: "May you be strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father." So as you studied last week, we are to live by being strong, by having endurance, by being patient. We're to live with joy, and we're to live with thankful hearts.

But how do you do that in this world? How do you watch the news last night and find yourself feeling strong? How do you look at all the displays of wickedness that are rampant everywhere and find yourself with joy? How is it that we are to, verse 12, "give thanks to the Father," and not just give in to total despair? Well, the answer to how you do that is verses 15-20. It's by focusing on Christ.

How are you strengthened with power? By focusing on Christ. How do you endure in this life? By focusing on Christ. How do you find patience in the

midst of all the brokenness? By focusing on Christ. And how in the world, how in this world do you live with joy and thankfulness with all that's going on? Here's his response to those verses, it's verses 15-20: by focusing on the preeminence of Christ. Remind yourself that He is sovereign over creation. And when you walk into the church, He is sovereign over His church. And even when you look to the end of all things, He is sovereign then, too. You find joy and gratefulness in this life by focusing on Jesus.

And Paul is also fighting the argument here. It's kind of hard for us to see; we have to go back to understand what's happening two thousand years ago; and then when we do that, it becomes crystal clear. When he says, "In Him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell," what Paul is saying is there's not these number of emanations that proceed from God that each have a small part of God like the Gnostics taught. No, no. It instead is this, that Christ is the fullness of God. This word "fullness" is used very purposefully, because it is combating the very error of that day, because in that day, just like in our day, you can't afford to be wrong on Jesus. You must know the true, biblical Jesus.

Verse 20, "and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things." There will come a day when all things are made right, all things are brought back into alignment, all things are brought into perfect submission. The righteous on that day will find their reward in Christ, the unrighteous at the end of all things will be judged. The fallen angels will be punished. Even creation itself will be restored. All things.

And what we see here is that in verse 16 it says, "Jesus created all things," and in verse 20, "all things are going to be brought in their rightful place," nothing gets left out, even creation itself. Make note of Romans 8:19, "For I consider the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation awaits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

And not only creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, grown inwardly, as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." There will come a day at the end of all things where your glorified body is given to you, where creation itself is restored, where the righteous are rewarded with Christ, where the unrighteous, the unrepentant are in judgment in hell, and all things are brought into their proper submission to God. Romans 8 says the whole creation is groaning.

About three years into our marriage came a date: May 3, 1999. I know that date, because everybody who lives where I live that was there will never forget it - the most devastating tornado that had ever come through. May 3, 1999, street after street, after street,, after street after street was just houses who had been hit by the tornado where structures were lifted off and were gone, and the only thing you saw for neighborhoods was just concrete slabs. And I remember the day that happened, before we knew how severe it was, I remember saying to Marcy, "I hope this isn't a date we remember." And now it's a date I'll never forget.

The earth is groaning. When you see tornadoes and earthquakes and hurricanes, the earth is groaning. Job 15 talks about how the whole universe itself is impacted by the fall.

Yesterday we were driving down here, I was preaching at a conference out of town this weekend; and so I went, preached there, went back to the house. And me and Marcy packed up yesterday and drove down here, and had all these storms greeting us. Felt like I was back home in Oklahoma. And so Marcy was driving, and I was navigating on my phone, and it was a pretty brilliant game we had going of I'm trying to track the storms and how fast we need to drive to get there to get ahead of the storms. And then a storm popped up right around Denton, so we need to slow down just a little bit to let that storm pass by. It was actually one of the great achievements of my life to navigate so swimmingly.

Well, the earth is groaning. You see it every time there's a storm. You see it every time there's a tornado. You see it every time there's destruction. You

see it every time there's a fire. You see the human body every time there's cancer, groaning. But one day, one day at the end of all things, all things will be made right, all things. Jesus who created all things will bring all things unto perfect submission, verse 20, "whether on earth or in heaven."

Genesis 3:17, you've got the fall, and everything's impacted by the fall. The animal realm was impacted. Women are impacted, men are impacted. The ground, the earth itself is impacted, Genesis 3:17, because of the fall; and the impact of it, "the ground is now going to bear thorns and thistles." And so every year at Christmas time we sing the words of Isaac Watts, "No more let sin or sorrow grow, nor thorns infest the ground. He comes to make His blessings known far as the curse is found." He wrote that, by the way, not about Christmas, he wrote that about the second coming, when the Lord Jesus makes all things fall into submission of Him. In fact, when you get to heaven, when you meet Isaac Watts and you say, "Hey, I loved your Christmas song," he'll have no idea what you're talking about, you're going to have to tell him. He didn't write about the first coming, he wrote it about the second coming, on that day when even the earth is restored.

Verse 20, "Whether on earth or in heaven," sin impacted everything. The fallen angels impacted the spiritual realm, and the curse on earth impacted the physical realm, and the sin of people impacted the human realm; and yet one day, all things we put in their proper place. You know the words of Philippians 2, "being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Every tongue will confess.

Now don't get confused here. Colossians 1, Philippians 2 are in no way teaching a universalism, in no way teaching that in the end everybody is saved. What it is saying is that in the end everyone will declare who Jesus is. Nobody will be wrong on Jesus for eternity. The demons know who Christ is, the angels know who Christ is, the redeemed know who Christ is; and even the unredeemed, at the end of all things, they will know who



Christ is, they will not be confused about that, and they will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, not unto salvation; too late at that point. But make no mistake: everyone in heaven, on earth, and under the earth will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Make sure that's the confession of your heart today.

And what gives Him the power to do that? It's the end of verse 20, "making peace by the blood of His cross." The reconciliation of all things includes the restored relationship with those who trust in Christ. It includes the pacification of those who have rebelled against Christ, so that for all eternity, everything is rightly submissive to the authority of Christ. In the cross, Christ defeats His enemies. In the cross, believers are cleansed. In the cross, we see the demonstration of His power over sin and death and the grave. And at the end of all things, everything will be brought into its rightful submission to Christ. Make sure you're ready to meet Him. Do not be wrong on who Jesus is.

Just for a final moment, let me just give you a couple of things to think about as we apply this, and we'll be done. Number one, "Christ is to be first place in all things." Is this true in your life today? Christ is to be first placed in all things. So just ask yourself, "Is this true in my life today? Is He first place in my marriage? Is He first place in my job? Is He first placed in my finances? Is He first place in our church? Is He first place in the ministry I'm a part of? Is He first place in all things?" That should be the filter through which you make every decision of your life: "How will this reflect on Christ?"

Before you decide whether to say this, or to write this, or to post this, ask yourself, "How will this reflect upon Christ?" Before you talk to your boss or your employee, before you confront your mate, ask yourself, "How will this reflect upon Christ?" Before you ask yourself, "Should I do this? Should I go there? Should I say this? Should I wear this?" let everything go through the filter of, "How will this reflect upon Christ?" If He is to be the preeminent One, the highest ranking thing over every part of our life, let everything you do bring glory to Him.

Second, if at the end of all things all things are brought into rightful submission under Him, ask yourself, "Am I living that way today? Am I submitting to Him today? Is there any part of my life where I'm trying to cling to control? Is there any part of my life where I'm not yet submitting to His lordship even right now?"

So back to verse 11 that you looked at last week, "May you be strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy." How do you live with joy in this broken world? Here's how: by focusing on the glory of Christ, by remembering you were made by Him, that all things exist through Him, and all things are ultimately for Him.

You likely know the name of Joni Eareckson Tada, well-known lady with all kinds of ministry. Her life's been a hard one. She was in a diving accident; she was a teenager, left her as a quadriplegic. So these last number of decades have been lived in a wheelchair, unable to do normal, basic things that we all do for ourselves and take for granted. 2010 she had stage 3 cancer; by God's grace, overcame that. Eight years later had a return of cancerous tumor; by God's grace lived through that. And when she thinks about heaven, she's excited about the restoration of all things, of course.

If you were her, if you had been confined to a wheelchair for decades, when you think about heaven, with no more sorrow and no more pain and no more sickness, what comes to your mind of what you can't wait to do? Get up, run, jump, walk, explore. She's not been able to do that for decades. But listen to her words as she contemplates heaven. She said, "I can't wait for that day, because when I get my glorified body, the first thing I'm going to do with my resurrected legs is fall down on grateful, glorified knees. I will say as Psalm 95:6 says, 'Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.'

"You know, I realize in heaven I'll have the chance then to jump and dance and walk and run. It will be my privilege, a new body that can move. But I think that kneeling very still on bended, glorified knees; I think when I get

to heaven that will be my sacrifice of praise. To not move when I will be able to move will be one last chance to show the Lord how truly thankful I really am." How is she living with joy in this broken life? By focusing on the glory of Christ today and for all eternity.

My friends, don't be wrong on Jesus. He is the one who has made all things, and all things exist by Him and through Him and for Him. Make sure your life reflects Christ.

[Prayer] Our Lord, we thank You today for Your grace. We thank You today for Your Word. Lord, I'll be quick to confess that I would be fully inadequate to in any way exhaust the depth of the riches of this text; I simply don't have the mind or the ability to do it justice. But I do pray that what has been said today has been true and has been helpful, and that Your Spirit would move in power to help us to live every day of our life with the awareness that You are the preeminent One. You are sovereign over creation. You are sovereign over the church. You are sovereign over the consummation of all things. All things are by Your hand, through Your work, and for Your glory. May that impact not only our eternity, but truly every waking moment You lend us. It's in Your name that we pray. Amen.