

The Agony of What We Don't See, and the Glory of What We are Brought to See

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Let us pray.

Dear heavenly Father, most gracious and holy Lord, we thank thee for this time that thou has given us as a body of thy people to come together, Lord, to worship thee in Spirit and in truth. Lord, we need thee. We need thee, Lord, to come and breath life into our souls. Lord, we need thee to breath life upon those souls. Lord, we thank thee for the Holy Spirit that thou has put in thy people to testify of thy Son. And, Lord, we pray for that testimony now. We pray, Lord, that you would reveal him exalted, that you would reveal him as having preeminence in our lives. Lord, that you would put down all of the things, all of the wickedness, all of the evil, all of the distractions, all of the afflictions, all of the things, Lord, that would rob us of our communion with thee. And, Lord, may you be pleased to be the author and the finisher of our faith this day. Lord, that we may see thee is my prayer this day. To the praise and glory of thy name, in Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

This morning I want to talk about the preeminence of Christ. The preeminence of Christ in the life of a child of God. It seems to be a topic that is easy for us to understand, how Christ is our Lord, how is the Lord of all things and I think every child of God in this room would attest to that. They would attest to that when the Lord brings them to see that he is the Lord of all things.

We have a couple of places to go this morning to establish that fact, the preeminence of Christ before we go to our text so if you'll join me first in Ephesians 1 beginning in verse 19. The Apostle Paul writes, "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe." What is the greatness of this power to us-ward who believe?

"According to the working of his mighty power." That, of course, is how we believe, according to the working of his mighty power.

"Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." That is resurrection life that the child of God has in Christ Jesus. And then this is where he's sitting and reigning as our Lord,

“Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things,” “things” is in italics, we can throw it out of there and it’s still going to say the same thing, “he has put all under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.” He is the head of the church. He has been given all things under his feet. That word “all” means all. That’s the preeminence of Christ.

“Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” It’s a reality in the child of God’s life when he comes and he reveals the preeminence of himself. You say, “Well, that’s an odd way to put it.” We just read that he has the preeminence; we just heard that he is over all things. Well, we don’t see it that way sometimes.

Now we leave Ephesians and we go to see what Peter says about it. Turn over with me to 1 Peter 3. Peter, at the end of 1 Peter 3 at verse 22 and speaking of Christ says this, “Who is gone into heaven,” that’s what Paul said. Sitting, reigning. Reigning as our Lord. “Who is gone into heaven and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.” Subject, meaning dominion. Their dominion being put down under his feet. Those three things that he mentions: angels, all authorities and then that all encompassing word “powers.” What has power in your life? That’s the question. What has power in your life that robs Christ of the preeminence that the Father has given him in your life? You say, “No, no, no. That’s not possible. He’s still preeminent. He’s still reigning over all things.” True, but do we live that way?

Now with this backdrop, with these words that are fresh in our minds, let’s go to our text by the Apostle Paul in Hebrews 2 and this is where we will be. Chapter 2, verse 8, and you’re going to hear familiar words again, “Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him.” Yes, the preeminence of Christ, “But now we see not yet all things put under him.” Is that tragedy to you? Does that bring you sorrow?

You know, if you’re ever going to look for comfort for your flesh, don’t go to the Apostle Paul. Don’t go to what the Lord gave him; don’t go to what the Holy Spirit moved him to write. He is the most creature-debasing person in the Word of God. The Lord is always on Paul’s mind, to debase the creature and to exalt his Lord.

Verse 8 is one of those things. We just read what he said to the people in Ephesians that Christ is preeminent over all things and he is, and gloriously so. And then he says it again here to the Jewish nation and we know the book of Hebrews is written to that Jewish nation, the religious Jews. And all through the book of Hebrews, it has one commonality in it, the preeminence of Christ. The preeminence over the angels, the preeminence over the priesthood and Melchizedek, the preeminence over the law and Moses, the preeminence over Abraham’s faith, the preeminence over the faith of man, Christ.

This is really, really a deep verse. This text has to stop us in our place. For the tried child of God in this room who has been through many battles, who has been through the afflictions, who has been under the attacks, I think you can stand with me as the Lord has

given me revelation of this verse, and say, "I understand it. I understand that all things are in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him. He left nothing that is not put under him, I understand that. I understand that my Lord is over all things but now, in this life, I don't see it. I don't see it. I can't get to that place where I see it."

And that's what I want to talk about today. What are those things that cloud our view of Christ reigning? What are those enemies that cloud our understanding of Christ reigning? What are those things and I believe as we start to identify those things, you will see kinship with me. You will see kinship in those things. Yes, these are the things that rob the preeminence of Christ. Positionally, yes, he has the preeminence but this verse, a powerful verse, "But now we see not yet all things put under him," because this isn't heaven.

So, what are those things we don't see under him at this time? Well, the first one is Satan. The devil himself. I have some verses about these things and first we're going to hear from Peter in 1 Peter 5:8 he says this, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Do you hear that? That's an active enemy. That's an enemy that has been put under Christ's feet. That is an enemy that Christ is reigning over but the Apostle Peter understood, too, that it's an active enemy. He's continuously trying to thwart Christ and what Christ has done and in him finished. He is trying to throw Christ off his rightful reigning place. And isn't that the case when we entertain Satan in our life as subtle as he may be, as coming as an angel of light, as coming with the Scriptures? That communion, that understanding of the preeminence of Christ is gone. Peter says he's a very active enemy.

But listen to what Paul says in Romans 16:20. He says, "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." This is what he wrote to the church in Rome, the believers. Shortly, Satan is going to be bruised. Why? Why is that shortly? Because our life is a vapor and as we pass off the scene of this, we will see him defeated perfectly. We will see that here. Not all the time, we're going to get to that.

"And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen." And that's it. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ must teach us that, that this enemy that tugs on us every day, that enemy that wants us to walk a different way, that enemy that is telling us, contrary to Christ, but in the form of Christ. That's where he's the most dangerous, dressing up in sheep's clothing, dressing things up in a religious tone.

But then we have the testimony of the Holy Spirit to John in Revelation 20:10, where he writes, "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." Well, there you go. There is where the end of Satan is. There is the end of the devil one day and that victory has already been accomplished, but we struggle. That victory is done, but we struggle.

We still struggle against that enemy and he's not the only one. What about death? What about the fear of death? We don't have to go far in Hebrews 2, just drop down to 14 with me, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Do you see that terminology? Christ, through his death and resurrection, defeated the devil, defeated Satan, defeated the one that has that fear of death that he uses as one of his darts. That specter of death that he continues to haunt and to throw at the child of God because they look at death, as he teaches them, that death is a finality, death is the end of all things where Christ says, "No, it's the beginning of all things." It's the beginning of understanding that you are known as you are known in the Kingdom of heaven. But what a deception, the fear of death. What a deception that he might destroy them and that the power of death, that is the devil.

Look at 15, "And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." It's a bondage. It's a bondage in this life. Death and the hold it has on us, the fear, it's such a bondage. Satan knows that. Satan uses that. But we just read it's been defeated but do we live that way? Can we live that way?

1 Corinthians 15:26, Paul writes, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." It shall be destroyed. In 55, he says, "O death, where is thy sting?" almost mockingly. That's a child of God who has preeminence of Christ in his life to see that Christ has put down death and the sting of death. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" That's the faith of the Son of God that Paul said he lived by, that's the faith of the Son of God that was given, that's the power of the Holy Ghost who revealed to Paul that there is a victor over death.

In 57, he writes, "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Victory in Jesus Christ. How are you and I going to have, the ones that are subject to this bondage our whole life, how are we going to have victory in this life? In this life?

Paul wrote here in Hebrews 2:8, "But now we see not yet all things put under him." We don't. It's a reality and it's a precious reality because there are times Satan uses that when we're sitting there and we're reading the Word, we don't have faith. "Oh, you must not be a child of God." Don't you understand Christ is reigning? Don't you understand he's on his rightful place? My soul has had its fill of this air-headed religion. This false religion that you see everywhere, "O Christ is reigning. I'm reigning in him. I don't have any struggle." But the Word of God doesn't testify of that. It testifies of the child of God struggling in this life and there's a reason for that.

Romans 8:28 tells us what that is. The Lord reveals himself in these struggles. The Lord reveals that we are dependent upon him in these struggles. And this fluffy, mainstream religion that we have today that everything, "Oh, just live above it. Just don't worry. Be happy." And the child of God says, "Well, why do I worry? Why do I have these complaints? Why do I have these murmurings?" And the Apostle Paul tells us, but we don't see all things put under him. We don't realize that all things are put under him.

That's a reality. That's the reality of life. That's the reality for the child of God in this life. And as we're hit with Satan's wiles, it's a reality and as the fear of death comes, it's a reality. But what about sin? Sin is very active too, isn't it?

But we know that they shall call his name Jesus and he shall save his people from their sins and in our minds and in our souls, the Holy Spirit has taught us and revealed to us that that is what he's done. He has saved us from our sin. He has nailed them on the tree. His precious blood has covered them. Do you live in that reality every day? Do you get up every morning and say, "Ah, I'm covered by the blood of Christ," and you just go skipping off into the day? You don't have any warfare? You don't have any doubts? Why do we have doubts? "But now we see not yet all things put under him."

Zechariah 13:1 tells us, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David." In that day, the day we need it. What day is that for you? I know that day that is for me: that's daily. "In that day," the day of the Lord, the day that he comes to your soul, "there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." Why is open always or is it just opened once and we bathe in it and we go on, we're not polluted any more? I think we see that with the picture of the priests in the laver that sat outside the Holy of Holies. They had to wash before they went in there every time. We must be washed. The blood is applied by that precious, precious third person. To reveal it to our minds and our conscience, to our understanding, that that blood has covered the multitude of sins. "And not yet all things are put under him." That's what we see.

Then Paul says this in Romans 6, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." That's the reigning Christ. That is the Lord reigning in the soul of the child of God's life, that sin doesn't have dominion over us, that death doesn't have dominion over us or the fear of it. That Satan doesn't have the dominion over us. And truly, that's of a truth, he doesn't. But we can't see it without him. We can't get there on our own. We can't get there picking up a book. We can't get there just being happy. I love when the Word of God and, believe me, my flesh don't love this, but my new man loves it when the Word of God reveals my dependency on him, my inability without him.

So, we still see sin, we still see death and we still see Satan but what about the world? What an enemy the world is. For some reason as we get older, we think we keep conquering the world but we can't get away from Ecclesiastes 3:11, "He hath made every thing beautiful in his time." Yes, he has. Everything that the Lord has made is beautiful in his time of revelation of himself in it. That's how it's beautiful, when the Lord reveals himself in it.

"Also he hath set the world in their heart." Do you see how close that is to you and I? It's in our inner man, the world. Do you understand that? It's so close to us as an enemy. We like to think these enemies are over the hill somewhere, that we've got the strategic position against those enemies and we've got them all right where we want them. But

then the Lord hits us with a verse like this that the world is so close to you, Satan is so close to you, sin is the spot that remains. "Hath set the world in their heart." He has set it in their mind. That's the fallen nature of man. The world is so close to us, the lust of the world, the allurements of the world, the desires of the world and then the Lord tells us why.

"So that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end." Do you understand that? I understand that as dependency. No man, you're not going to get there by yourself. You're not going to get to salvation by yourself. These enemies must be defeated and Romans 8:28 says that the Lord did all these things for the good of his people. So, that world that sets so close to us, is for the good of his people. Why? So we don't get used to it. So we don't love it. So we don't desire it. You say, "But it sets so close, we do desire it." You're right, we do. When do we desire the world? "But now we see not yet all things put under him." When we don't see Christ reigning in it. When we believe we reign over it. "Oh, we've got it by the tail. We can do whatever we want." It's subtle. It's very subtle. Oh, it's so close to us.

John said this in 1 John 5:19, "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." Do you hear that? And we know that first of all, that's what the Holy Spirit has to reveal to you, that you are of God and as the Holy Spirit reveals to you that you are of God, he reveals to you that the whole world lies in wickedness. Everything outside of Christ lies in wickedness. No matter how you spin it, no matter how much we desire it, the Lord says, through John, it lies in wickedness. That's a powerful verse.

Then we come to 1 Corinthians 11:32. Do you know how we're delivered from the world? Listen to this, "But when we are judged, we," the children of God judged. Maybe you don't like that terminology. Maybe you don't like that. "Oh, wait, wait. I'm not judged, I'm chastened." Well, that's okay because that's what he says here, "But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord." Why? "So that we should not be condemned with the world." "Condemned with the world? What are you telling me?" I'm telling you that the world and Satan and all of those things mentioned, that John mentioned in Revelation, are going to be thrown in the Lake of Fire.

But the child of God will not be condemned with the world. It's a promise. It's right here. But how does he wean us from it? He chastens us. He chastens us. Hebrews tells us that it hurts. Hebrews says something else: that it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Christ's righteousness. All of these things we seem to be still subject to because we don't see him reign.

But the world is not all. What about the flesh? What about yourself? We've already read part of this in Romans 6:6, "Knowing this that our old man is crucified with him." That old man, that flesh, is crucified with him. If at all, it's going to be put down, it's because of him, it's because of him and what he did on the cross. He is victorious over that old man. That's another thing that's going to be thrown in the Lake of Fire.

You know, you think of that terminology “Lake of Fire” and you say, “Wow, that’s kind of scary,” but that’s actually a pretty good lake. I like that lake. All of my enemies are going to be thrown there. All of Christ’s enemies are going to be thrown there. Lake of Fire, consuming wrath. I pray for the day that the Lord consumes in his holy wrath my old man, my old nature.

What about Paul’s struggle in Romans 7 which we’ve talked about recently? What about that? The things that he wants to do he can’t do because we don’t see him. “Oh, I know he’s reigning. I know the Lord has taught me that he’s reigning. I know that the gospel is what I am to follow, to walk after, but why can’t I?” I see another member in me warring. I see something, this nasty flesh, and how does that end? O, praise be to God. O, wretched man that I am. Who shall deliver me? The Lord Jesus Christ. He seems to be the answer for every one of these.

Paul tells us in Romans 8:6, “to be carnally minded is death.” Isn’t that true? I used to look at that verse and say, “Okay, that’s us and them again. The carnally minded people are dead and the spiritually minded people are alive. That’s an easy verse to understand. Us and them.” Too bad, though, that “us,” we experience both of them. We experience the deadness of the carnality of this world, the carnality of our flesh, the carnality of sin and it is nothing but death and you may think it’s life for a season and you may be beguiled by it as evil is. “To be carnally minded is death but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”

So, Paul what is it? “Now we see not yet all things put under him.” Well, what do we see? We see Satan; we see death; we see sin; we see the world; we see our flesh; and, you know, we still see the law. We still see the have-tos the must-tos the gotta-dos. In Romans 7:8, he says, “But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.” We see how the sin and the law is working here. Later, Paul will say the law is spiritual, that it’s a good thing. For us, we don’t understand the spirituality of the law and how the Lord uses it, we become carnally with the law and say, “Okay, then it’s our rule of life.” Or, we start to exact that as, “This is the rule for this one. This is the rule for that one. This is the rule for this one.” Because we don’t understand the spirituality of it; because what we see is the law and when we see that, as a law, and the have-to and the must-do, it becomes so burdensome to us. Where’s the deliverance? Romans 7:6 says, “But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.”

So, we have all of these things, Paul, “thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.” All those things I mentioned today are under his feet. The afflictions that you’re going through today are under his feet. The trial that you’re going to have today is under his feet. The temptation that you’re going to have today is under his feet. Everything in

this world that troubles you is under his feet. It's been brought under the dominion of Christ. The dominion of him.

“Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.” You know, Paul, I tell you, if we were left there, it would be most miserable but that one little phrase that comes next, that one little reality, that one precious truth that puts everything back in the proper perspective, “But we see Jesus.” What was the antidote to every one of those things? What was the remedy to not seeing the world? It comes right back to all being put under Christ's feet. All of it.

But then he throws us into a present reality in our life, we don't see it but then he tells us this is when we see it, “But we see Jesus.” When do we see him? We see Jesus in freedom, not bondage. We see Jesus in no condemnation. Not bondage. Not sin. We see Jesus reigning. We see Jesus in love. We see Jesus in peace. We see Jesus in life. We see Jesus in purity. We see Jesus in deliverance. We see Jesus in sanctification. We see Jesus in justification.

But Paul, you just said, “Now we see not yet all things put under him.” But Paul says, “But we see Jesus.” Now, Paul, “Did you get there by yourself. Is it just some switch that we switch on? Is it just jump over here now into the new man? This bipolar thing that we are? You know, we're old man, new man, we could just be one and be the other?”

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death.” Understand that. He was made flesh because all of those things that we just mentioned were all the things that attack us in this world. And Paul said, “But he was made to come down to this world.” We see Jesus who went first before anything we've ever been through.

“Who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” Now, if you think that's every man, then your Christ is a failure because every man is not in heaven. If you believe Paul is talking and addressing the people of God, like I do, then if you believe that the elect children of God are the ones Christ died for and the ones that Christ came down for and the ones that Christ is revealing himself to, then this is for you. He came down “that he by the grace of God should taste death,” partake in death, to defeat death.

“For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory.” But we see Jesus. Do you know what this? That's glory. In this life, that's what we have. In the next life, we will have uninterrupted communion, uninterrupted glory with the Lord. But now, he is enough. He is the only one who can comfort the child of God in this life. The child of God. He is the only one who can reveal his preeminence. He is the only one who can restore the sight of him. I'm not slighting the Holy Spirit here because yes, it is the Holy Spirit that reveals Christ. I'm talking about our Triune Lord.

There is no other way. Look at the rest of this, “to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” Perfect through a life of happiness? No. Perfect through sufferings. All those six things I mentioned earlier that we see now, that’s sorrow, that’s suffering. Is it sorrow to you? Is it agony to you when you see those things? Is it sorrow to you when you see those things because when you do see those things, they are reigning in your life but praise be to God, we see Jesus. We see Jesus when Jesus is ready for us to see Jesus and it will be in his perfect time because there are many things to learn in this life, many things, and he’s a faithful teacher. He and he alone.

“For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.” Do you see the oneness? That’s life. He is able. He is sufficient and for the child of God, we see Jesus.

Dear heavenly Father, most gracious and holy Lord, come with thy power, O Lord, that we may see thee and may you put down all of these enemies that want so much of our soul. Lord, we know that if we are kept we are only kept in thee in this oneness. Reveal that to us now in this hour and in the hour to come, to the praise and glory of thy name. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.