

Introduction

I add my welcome to the one you have already received. For those of you who are visiting today, my name is David Kingston, and I am one of the elders of BCF ; I also teach chemistry at Virginia Tech. I should also add that the preaching at BCF is shared by several of the elders and other gifted men, so next week Chris Faith, another of the elders, will be bringing the message. This is the second message in a series on Paul's letter to the Colossians; the series is titled "Alive in Christ", and today's message is "The Sufficiency and Supremacy of Christ"

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Last week Sandy Young introduced the series with a message titled "Is Jesus Enough?" The apostle Paul had not visited Colossae when he wrote this letter, but he knew about it from Epaphras, who was the missionary who planted the church, and he wrote this letter in part to counter a wrong teaching that was becoming popular in Colossae; the teaching that Jesus was not enough for a full Christian life. In this teaching Jesus was seen as the entry into the Christian life, the "front door" as Sandy put it, but he was not enough. The false teachers were saying something like "What you have is quite all right, and a good foundation for faith. Now let us just finish it off for you, and you really will be Christians." Much of this false teaching had to do with the minimizing of Jesus. Many people thought He was important but not essential. They had given Him a place in their lives, without recognizing that He demands 1st place. Jesus was prominent to them, but not preeminent. In some ways we can be very glad that this teaching was going around, because it led Paul to write what is one of the clearest statements of the sufficiency and supremacy of Christ in the Bible., and today we get to study it. What a privilege!

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Col 1:15-23

The Son, he is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 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 and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

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Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

What a rich passage! If you are a Christian, I hope that it makes your heart fill with joy at the greatness of your Savior. And if you are not yet a Christian believer, I hope that you are intrigued by this description and want to know more about Him. So let us look at what this passage tells us about our Lord. We will look at two major aspects of the supremacy of Jesus Christ; first His supremacy in all things, and then his supremacy and sufficiency in our salvation.

Slide**1. The supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things****a. The Supremacy of Christ in His Nature**

He is the image of the invisible God (v 15)... God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him (v. 19). In other words, Jesus is the exact representation of God, and has all of God's might and power. The writer to the Hebrews puts it this way Heb 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being.

A little boy looked up to the sky & asked, "Is God up there?" When his mother assured him that He was, he replied, "Wouldn't it be nice if He would put His head out & let us see Him?" What the boy didn't understand was that God has let us see Him. We don't have to guess what God is like. We have seen Him when we see Jesus. So if you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus! Do you doubt God's love? Then look at Jesus dying for you on the cross. Do you doubt God's anger at sin? Then look at Jesus turning the moneychangers out of the temple. Do you doubt God's wisdom? The look at Jesus defeating the attempts of the Jewish leaders to trap him until his time was ready. Yes, praise God, Jesus is the image of the invisible God

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b. The Supremacy of Christ in His Eternity

He is the firstborn over all creation. v. 15

He is before all things v. 17

We need to be careful that we understand what Paul means when he uses the sentence "He is the firstborn over all creation." If you get visited by missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (the Mormon church) or the Jehovah's Witnesses, they will likely take you to this verse and say something like "See, Jesus was a creature; he was an important one – the firstborn – but still just a creature." The Mormons teach that the God of this universe was once a man in another universe who became a God. They say that the first person created was Jesus followed by Lucifer, so that Jesus and the devil are brothers. Therefore Jesus is a little less than God, since if God created Jesus then Jesus must be inferior to God.

But this is clearly NOT what Paul means by firstborn. If Jesus was a creature, how could he be, as Paul says in the next verse, the creator of all things? We must give Paul credit for being consistent! So what does "firstborn" mean? The Bible teacher John MacArthur says "The Greek word Prototokos refers to position. It refers to rank; it refers to right of authority; to primacy, not to chronology. The firstborn is the one who has the rights of inheritance. In the Jewish context everybody knew that. And even in the Gentile context everybody understands that. They had no question in Colosse about what he was referring to; that Christ was the honored One, the privileged One, the prestigious One, the Father's heir."

Paul goes on to say in verse 17 "He is before all things". So like God He predates time; he was before time began, uncreated and eternal.

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c. The Supremacy of Christ in His Creative Power

By Him all things were created: v. 16

things in heaven and on earth,

visible and invisible,

whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities;

all things were created by him and for him

Wow! What a statement! Our Lord, our Savior, the "gentle Jesus, meek and mild" of our childhood prayers is in reality the one who created all things! And what a list this is; "things in heaven and on earth" so the universe as we know it, with this earth and the solar system, and with gazillions of stars and black holes and planets. And then "things ... visible and invisible" Visible things are the created world that we can see and touch. So what are the invisible things? They could be things like the wind and love and pain, but since Paul goes on to say "whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities" the invisible things probably refer to the unseen powers of this world; to angels and demons. And then "all things were created *by him* and *for him*." So this world, this universe, angels, demons, were all made by Christ and for Christ; for His glory! Note that Paul does not say he created them evil. In fact, the little book of Jude speaks of "angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling" (Jude 1:6). They were created good, and they rebelled against God. And in some way we do not yet understand, even their evil will glorify God.

And let me say something to those of you who are not yet believers in Jesus Christ. The claims that the bible makes about Jesus are big. You don't have to believe them, and you may not believe that the bible is inspired by God, but you must acknowledge that the bible claims that Jesus is God, the creator God, the one and only God. Disbelieve him if you must, but don't cheapen him by claiming that we can choose God like people choose a political party or a favorite brand of laundry detergent. He is either the Creator God or the bible is false: we can't have it both ways.

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d. The Supremacy of Christ in His Maintaining Power

In Him all things hold together. v. 17

This is to me a fascinating and overlooked truth about Jesus. When we think of creating something we usually think of making things that hang around; so a builder builds a house, or a boy makes a Lego model, or a girl makes a dress for her doll. But if we look at Christ's creation of the world we must realize that it is not static; it is full of energy that holds it all together. Look for example at the atom. Most of us learned in High School or in first year chemistry that the atom consists of a nucleus made up of protons and neutrons surrounded by a cloud of electrons. The electrons are negatively charged and the protons are positively charged, and opposite charges attract, so they attract each other, and everyone is happy.

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But what about the protons in the nucleus? Why don't they repel each other, since they are all positively charged? Well it turns out that the protons and neutrons are made up of quarks, which come in various flavors with creative names like up and down and charm and strange

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And quarks are just one kind of subatomic particle; others include leptons and bosons and the appropriately named gluons.

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And what holds this alphabet soup of particles together? Physicists speak of the nuclear force and the strong interaction, and in purely scientific and mathematical terms they are correct. But where do these forces come from? I believe that it is the maintaining power of Jesus Christ that keeps the quarks and the gluons and the bosons in their places, since "In Him all things hold together." And when the day of the Lord comes, all will be destroyed. As Peter states in 2 Peter 3:10 "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare."

And this truth is both an encouragement and a warning. As an encouragement, it reminds us that our Lord Jesus did not just create this world and then leave it to its own devices; he is here and now maintaining it and holding it together. And if he can do this for the universe, how much more can he do it for you, my fellow believers? He knows your strengths and your weaknesses, your triumphs and your trials. And it is he who is at this moment holding you together by his mighty power. So trust him with your doubts and your fears, and be strengthened by his might and power. He loves you; he cares for you; His mighty upholding power is sufficient for you. But this is also a warning to those who do not believe him. Yes, Jesus Christ is holding your world together now, but at some point in the future He will return and this world will "disappear with a roar." And where will you be on that day? Because he will return to judge all men and women, not on whether they have been good, but on whether or not they have trusted him and committed their lives to him.

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e. The Supremacy of Christ in the Church

He is the head of the body, the church; v. 18

As those of you who were here this summer will remember, the summer sermon series was on the theme of the Church, the body of Christ. Mike Buehrer preached on the subject of Christ as the head of the church on June 1, and so we can simply note that the idea of the church, understood as consisting of all believers in Jesus Christ, as the body of Christ implies that he is the Head. And just as it is the head that decides what the body must do, so each of us is responsible to him and must look to him for direction and for service.

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f. The Supremacy of Christ in His Victory over Death

He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead v. 18

We will come back to this in a few minutes, so for now let us just note that Jesus was the first person to rise from the dead without any human intervention. Yes, there had been people raised from the dead before; Elijah and Elisha both were used by God to raise someone from the dead, and Jesus himself raised Lazarus from the dead, but Jesus is the first and last being to rise from the dead without human intervention and God's power.

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g. The Supremacy of Christ over all things

So that in everything he might have the supremacy v. 18

Since Christ is supreme in His Nature, in His Eternity, in His Creative Power, in His Maintaining Power, in the Church, and in His Victory over Death, He naturally is supreme over all things. But is he supreme in your heart? Does your heart rejoice at this recitation of his supremacy?

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2. The Supremacy and Sufficiency of Christ in Reconciliation

a. The Nature of reconciliation

What is reconciliation? It is one of the words that the Bible uses to describe the salvation that Jesus Christ provides. John MacArthur has a helpful analysis here. He reminds us that the Bible uses five words to describe salvation. They are Justification, redemption, forgiveness, reconciliation and sonship (or adoption). He goes on to say

In justification, the sinner stands before God as the accused and is declared righteous.

In redemption, the sinner stands before God as the slave and is granted freedom by ransom.

In forgiveness, the sinner stands before God as a debtor, and the debt having been paid is forgotten.

In reconciliation, the sinner stands before God as an enemy, and is led to peace as a friend.

In sonship, the sinner stands before God as a stranger and is adopted as a son.

So In reconciliation, we stand before God as enemies, and are led to peace as friends. What a wonderful truth, that we were enemies of God but are now friends of God!

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b. The Need for Reconciliation

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. v. 21

So now we are told that we were once alienated from God – in other words, we were enemies of God. But God, in His love and mercy, provided a way for us to become friends

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c. The Plan of Reconciliation

For God was pleased ... through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, v. 20

The plan of reconciliation is through Jesus Christ. The one who created all things becomes the way that all things can be reconciled with God. Notice that “all things”. God is bigger than our vision; His wonderful purpose is that this whole universe will be reconciled to Him. Right now it is not; it is in rebellion now, under the power of the evil one, as a glance at any morning paper will tell you. But God is going to make friends with the universe again. Rom 8:18-19 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. When Paul says “all things” does he mean that even unrepentant sinners and demons are going to be reconciled? No, that goes against all the teaching of Scripture, against Jesus teaching of the two ways, the narrow way that leads to life and the broad way that leads to destruction. So when Paul says all things are reconciled, it doesn't mean fallen angels and unbelieving men, because these have rejected and spurned God's offer of reconciliation.

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d. The Cost of Reconciliation

By making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. v. 20

But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death v. 22

Here we come to the heart of the gospel. This glorious reconciliation, this being made friends of God, came at a terrible cost; the cost of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. He was and is the one who created all things; He made the earth with its ores of iron and other metals, that could be extracted and made into nails; he made trees that could be chopped down and made into crosses; and he made and upheld the men who despised and rejected him and nailed him to the cross, to die for their sins and my sins and your sins. Was there ever such love as that?

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e. The Fruit of Reconciliation

to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation v. 22

Why did God reconcile us? So He can welcome us into heaven! God so loves you and me that He wants us to be with Him forever, but that cannot happen unless we are first forgiven and cleansed from sin. And so Jesus took the punishment that should have been ours, and we are forgiven. So now we can be presented before God as holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.

What a wonderful savior we have! He is supreme in His Nature, in His Eternity, in His Creative Power, in His Maintaining Power, in the Church, and in His Victory over Death, He is supreme over all things, and yet he gave his body up to death for us and for our salvation! Do these truths gladden your heart? They should do!!

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I want to close with a powerful affirmation of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. It comes from a message by Dr. S. M. Lockridge (1913 – 2000). He was the Pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, a prominent African-American congregation in San Diego, California, from 1953 to 1993. He was known for his preaching across the United States and around the world. One of his most well-known sermons is “The Seven Way Christ” which ends with a marvelous description of Jesus known as “That’s My King”.

Now I know that Kings have had a bad reputation in the USA ever since that regrettable disagreement in 1776, but the Bible talks of Jesus as Lord of lords and King of kings

Rev 17:14

the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings — and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."

So it is perfectly legitimate to see Jesus as our King, and Pastor Lockridge will help us to this. This portion of his message came at the end of an hour long sermon, and his voice is husky as a result, so listen hard. And it's OK to say amen!

Let's listen to Pastor Lockridge

That's My King"

“He’s enduringly strong, He’s entirely sincere, He’s eternally steadfast. He’s immortally graceful. He’s imperially powerful. He’s impartially merciful. He’s God’s Son. He’s a sinner’s savior. He’s the centerpiece of civilization. He stands alone in Himself. He’s unparalleled. He’s unprecedented. He’s supreme. He’s preeminent. He’s the loftiest idea in literature. He’s the highest idea in philosophy. He’s the fundamental truth in theology. He’s the miracle of the age. He’s the only one able to supply all of our needs simultaneously. He supplies strength for the weak. He’s available for the tempted and the tried. He sympathizes and He saves. He guards and He guides. He heals the sick, He cleans the lepers. He forgives sinners, He discharges debtors, He delivers captives, He defends the feeble, He blesses the young, He serves the unfortunate, He regards the aged, He rewards the diligent, He beautifies the meek. Do you know Him?

Well, my king is the king of knowledge, He’s the well-spring of wisdom, He’s the doorway of deliverance, He’s the pathway of peace, He’s the roadway of righteousness, He’s the highway of holiness He’s the gateway of glory, He’s the master of the mighty, He’s the captain of the conquerors, He’s the head of the heroes, He’s the leader of the legislators, He’s the overseer of the overcomers, He’s the governor of governors, He’s the prince of princes, He’s the king of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

His life is matchless. His goodness is limitless. His mercy is everlasting. His love never changes. His word is enough. His grace is sufficient. His reign is righteous. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Well. I wish I could describe Him to you. But He’s indescribable. Yes. He’s incomprehensible. He’s invincible, He’s irresistible. I’m trying to tell you, the Heavens cannot contain Him, let alone a man explain Him. You can’t get Him out of your mind. You can’t get Him off of your hands. You can’t outlive Him, and you can’t live without Him. Well. The Pharisees couldn’t stand Him, but they found out they couldn’t stop Him. Pilate couldn’t find any fault in Him. Herod couldn’t kill Him. Death couldn’t handle Him and the grave couldn’t hold Him. That’s my king!

He always has been, and He always will be. I’m talking about He [who] had no predecessor and He [who] has no successor. There was nobody before Him and there will be nobody after Him. You can’t impeach Him, and

He's not going to resign. We try to get prestige and honor and glory to ourselves, but the glory is all His. Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, and ever, and ever, and ever. How long is that? And ever, and ever, and ever, and ever, and when you get through with all of the forevers, then 'Amen'."

That's my King! Is he yours? Would you like him to be your king? If so, please talk to me afterwards and I will be glad to help you to make Jesus Christ the king of your life.

Let us Pray.