



“The Supremacy of the Son of God”

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Colossians 1:15–23

¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ 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.

²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. ²² 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— ²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move 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.

Do we get annoyed sometimes when we are reminded to do something we know we should do? Do we have someone in our lives who seems to remind us to do something that we are convinced we would have done without being reminded to do so? There is a NZ police show that Jo and I watch that is filled with examples of this! In one show a young man is pulled over and it is quickly discovered that the car has no safety inspection, that the car is completely unsafe to drive.

Because the young man seemed contrite the officer gave the young man some time to resolve the issues that car had. If the young man could fix the issues, he wouldn't be fined or punished for driving it illegally in the first place. The officer drives away and in the very next scene in the show, the officer sees the same illegal car on the road! He pulls the car over and sees the young man again driving the car illegally just after he spoke with the young man and graciously gave him a warning. Frustrated, the officer asks the young man what he was thinking? The young man simply shrugs his shoulders.

Why do we need to be reminded of things we should do? Because we can be pretty stubborn children.

We may think we're not as stubborn as this young man, but there's a little bit of Jonah in all of us, isn't there? God calls us to help a people, like the Ninevites, be reconciled to God, but we don't want to do it. God calls us to go to the east and we escape to the west. Even when our resistance produces great difficulty for us, we resist the call of God to be a part of His great work of reconciliation to Him and His Kingdom.

Today's passage, Paul is reminding the church in Colossae that Jesus is the Lord of Lords. He is reminding them that Jesus is calling the church to be part of his work of reconciliation. Although these truths seem so basic to faith, Paul knows that everyone needs to be reminded. Paul knows that God's children aren't yet fully mature and need to be graciously guided back to a faithful walk with Jesus.

For some context, we remember that Paul starts his letter saying that he is motivated to share God's grace and peace. Now he will remind them that Jesus is their Lord not to pester or nag, but to appeal to them, to be sober-minded. It's so easy to go astray. It's so easy to sin and follow others instead of God. It's so easy to leave grace and become enslaved again to sin.

Let's see how Paul reminds the church.

1.) Jesus is Lord

¹⁵ **The Son is the image of the invisible God**, the firstborn over all creation.¹⁶ **For in him all things were created**: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, **whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.** ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

In Colossians 1:15–17, Paul reminds the church that Jesus is the image of the invisible God. If you want to be led by God you must rely completely on Jesus, the perfect image of God. Paul would write in another letter that the church should never listen to anyone else. Paul said that if even he came to them with a new way of following God, the church was to reject it! The words and actions of Jesus are the words and actions of God. He is the perfect image of God.

Then Paul says that in Jesus all things were created, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities. All things were created for him. So Paul is not only saying that Jesus has more glorious than anything else in creation. There is no comparison between the two. Creation and all that is in it, was created for Jesus. All belongs to him. There is no separation between the religious and the secular. Jesus owns it all.

We can recall here the account of when Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum. There were collectors of the temple tax who asked Peter if Jesus paid this tax. Peter replied "Yes, he does," but then went to see Jesus who was staying in a house in the small fishing village. Even before Peter could speak, Jesus asked the question, "From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes—from their own children or from other?" Peter replied, "from others." Jesus said, "then the children are exempt. But so that we may not cause offense" Jesus then tells Peter that he would find money for the taxes through a miraculous event. The principle of the account was to show that Jesus was the Son of God, the Great King over all of Creation and therefore was obligated to obey any other.

Certainly this is an important reminder for the church in Colossae. When political leaders require submission from their subjects in order to run the government and establish order, it is easy to see how the church in Colossae might have assumed that they were to be submissive to their local governments. Certainly they were called to cause offense when we comply with local rule, but what

was vital that they remained submissive to only one; God Himself. They were never asked to bow their knee to any man or woman. They were united with God and He was their only leader.

2.) Jesus Has Work For the Church

¹⁸ **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. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ **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.

In Colossians 1:18–20, Paul reiterates that Jesus is their sole leader. Jesus is the head of the church. And as the head of the church, he is establishing his rule over creation. Just as the local leaders established their government over their subjects, Jesus too was establishing his government over everything. His government was one that was establishing reconciliation between his Father and humanity. Why reconciliation? Because God desired to be patient with humanity before He would eventually judge them.

God sent His Son because He desired to be gracious by providing peace with Him and His Kingdom. Reconciling the world wasn't to help the world become better human beings. Jesus wasn't sent to help humanity live a full life. Jesus was sent to reconcile the world to the Father before the Father and His Kingdom breaks into history in judgement of sin.

So in these verses, Paul is reminding the church at Colossae that Jesus is their one sole leader and he is calling them to enter into the work of his kingdom. The work of the Kingdom is to reconcile the world to the God and His Kingdom. This is important because the church may get confused and begin to follow their political leaders. Most likely their political leaders will ask them to be "good citizens" who pay their taxes, support their rule and don't cause any problems for the government.

If the church is tempted to submit to this leadership, they will no longer be following Jesus. They won't be calling for reconciliation to God and His Kingdom through the repentance of their sin and a submission to the authority of the Son. Instead, they would try to become "ideal" citizens who work hard, pay their taxes and provide good moral lessons to children. Paul wants the church to remain being partners of the Gospel, partners of those who only follow the leadership of Jesus their Saviour and Lord.

3.) Church Must Hold Onto This Call

²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. ²² 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**— ²³ **if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move 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.

In Colossians 1:21–23, we notice an important part of following Jesus that we often miss. Paul tells the church that Jesus, their only leader who has given them the task of joining in his ministry of reconciliation, desires that they become holy, without blemish and free from accusation. They are not yet this way. Even Paul in another letter said that he had not yet attained all that Jesus had purchased for him. He said that he strained to live out his complete salvation. He strained forward to the goal of full maturity in Christ.

How will the church in Colossae become this way? They will become this way only if they continue in their faith. They will become this way if they do not move from the hope held out in the Gospel of Jesus. I don't know what was happening in the church in Colossae, but we all certainly know that we can think that once we decide to follow Jesus, we can relax. We can live like an expatriate, secluded and insulated in a community that believes the same thing we do. We're just waiting for our time to return "home."

If the church in Colossae is thinking this, Paul is clearly trying to disabuse them of this danger. Having faith in Jesus wasn't just being thankful that one could go to heaven. That's just have faith in Jesus as someone who helped you. Having faith in Jesus means following him as Lord and Saviour. Jesus didn't just save the church in Colossae, he had called them to join in the work of the Kingdom of God. As they joined in that work of reconciliation, Paul knew the church would experience more and more the salvation that was true won for them. They would grow in their maturity, revealing more of the spotless holiness they had in Jesus.

The church is called to maturity in Jesus which can only happen if they hold firmly to the belief that Jesus is their Lord, that he calls them to follow in his work of reconciliation and that they hold firmly and do not move from this faith.

What is our application for today?

1.) Who is Your Leader?

The squeaky wheel gets oiled, doesn't it? Recently I was watching this show where a young couple were looking for an apartment in Thailand. The young woman seemed reasonable and responsible. She was working full-time as an English teacher. Her partner wasn't working but was instead going out with friends to enjoy himself. There was noticeable tension between them.

As the realtor took them to apartments, the young woman was looking for a cheaper home that was outside of the city center. The realtor found them the perfect place. The young man didn't like it because it was far from the bars and restaurants he like to visit. Even though he wasn't working he insisted on his choices. In the end, he squeaked the most and the young woman gave in. They moved in the city.

Isn't it easy for us to stop following the Lord and follow others through appeasement? We tell ourselves that we're still following the Lord by showing "grace" and giving in to the wishes and demands of others. Paul would tell us, that Jesus is the Lord over Creation. There is no one like him and he brooks no rivals. We may do our best not to give offense to others, but we should never follow anyone else.

2.) Are You Participating in His Reconciliation?

How do we know that we are following Him? We know when we follow all his words to us. He called us to make disciples by teaching others to obey all that he taught. This means when we invite others to join us on a Sunday that we aren't trying to just give others an inspiring message or a pleasant experience. Of course, we hope that does happen, but our goal is to see others reconciled to God through His Son.

Bruce Robinson and I have been going out into Milford trying to share with others or invite them to join us on Sunday. I find it easy to invite others to church, but I find it extremely difficult to talk about Jesus. It's easy for Bruce, but difficult for me. But I've found that sharing about Jesus is easier when I see a great model to follow. Last year, when we ran the Alpha series, each video we went through was an example of compassion and zeal for Jesus but coming from a place of humility and openness.

We became follower of Jesus because someone told us about him. We follow him not a church gathering. Jesus, the head of the Church, is calling us to enter his work of reconciliation. He is calling us to call others to follow him.

3.) Are you Holding onto His Call?

This is the shocking bit of Paul's letter. We will grow in our relationship with Jesus, we will get to know him more only if we hold fast to him and his work. We can't convince ourselves that being a Christian is just participating in the local church or just helping others. Being a Christian isn't just being a good or respected citizen. These things are good, but not the goal. We have a leader. He calls us to join in his work of reconciliation. We won't grow in Jesus if we neglect either of these truths.

There is a passage in the Bible that talks about the importance of reconciling people's hearts to their Creator. The passage describes a person who is possessed by an evil spirit. The teaching is that if you cast the demon out of the person and don't restore that person's heart to God, a greater number of demons, more wicked than before will enter that person heart and make their situation worse than before. If we're just helping people clean up their lives, we teach them that there are no consequences for rejected God. We can help other clean up their lives and allow them to go and do whatever they want. What will they have learned from us? God is supposed to serve me whenever I'm in trouble or have a need. I'm God and he is my helper in life.

There is no restoration of humanity apart from repentance; forsaking all else to follow Jesus. Jesus is Lord, our Lord. He calls us to join in his work of reconciliation through his death of the cross for the sins of humanity and through his life which reveals the Kingdom to come. Let's be a family that follows his lead with our family, friends and neighbours.