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THE PREMINENCE OF CHRIST



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colossians

A Study in the book of Colossians | by Pastor Ron Thomas

The Preeminence of Christ

A Study in the Book of Colossians

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THE LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS
THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST'S PREEMINENCE

Lesson One

Text: Colossians 1:1-12

I. GREETINGS Vs. 1-2

The beginning of every letter starts with the greeting. Verses one and two form the greeting and tell us much about the letter.

- A. Who? Vs. 1 "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ."
1. There can be no dispute that Paul is the author of this letter.
 2. Paul's office of apostleship and direction of the will of God authenticate this letter as God's Word.
- B. When?
1. Most concur that this letter was written between 60 and 61 A.D.
 2. At this time Paul was imprisoned in Rome and wrote letters to the Colossians, Phillipians and to Philemon.
- C. Where? Vs. 2 "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse."
1. This letter was written to the church or brothers at Colosse.
 2. It is believed that this church began as an outgrowth of Paul's three-year ministry in Ephesus. (Acts 19, 20:17-38) At this time "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." This would include the people in Colosse, Laodicea and Hierapolis.
 3. It is evident as you read this letter that Paul was not too familiar with the people in this church (2:1). Probably Epaphras was presently pastor of the church and was instrumental in its beginning.
- D. Why?
1. Paul learned of the church at Colosse through Epaphras.
 2. Evidently he visited Paul while in prison and reported his concern for this beloved church.

3. The church had been plagued by the teaching of heresies. Heresies such as Jewish legalism, Greek philosophic speculation and Oriental mysticism taught in some form or another that Christ alone was insufficient.
4. In answer and in rebuttal to the teaching, the theme of this letter is "Christ's Preeminence." The person that has placed his faith and trust in Jesus Christ is complete in Him.

II. AN EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE. Vs. 3-8

Though Paul did not personally know the members of this church, the things he heard by way of Epaphras made his heart feel full of gratitude.

A. Grateful They Heard The Gospel. Vs. 5-7

1. It centers in a person - Jesus Christ. Christ is preeminent in the gospel. The gospel is the story of His life, death and resurrection. (I Corinthians 15:1-4) To hear the gospel is to hear Christ.
2. It is the Word of truth. Vs. 5b. God's Word is truth because it came from God. (John 17:17) They were bombarded with so many religions and messages. We should judge all things in light of God's Word, which is true. Romans 3:4, Isaiah 8:20.
3. It is the message of God's grace. Vs. 6b. Grace is God giving us what we do not deserve. This is the reason the gospel is the good news. God sent His Son to those who were most undeserving. Romans 5:6-10.
4. It is the message for the whole world. Vs. 6. The gospel is the perfect gift for the world.
 - * Books would not suit the world for some cannot read.
 - * Food would not suit the world for tastes vary.
 - * Clothes would not suit the world for climates differ.
 - * Money would not suit the world for not every culture makes use of money.
 - * The gospel is suitable because it brings eternal life to all. It is the

seed that can be planted anywhere in the world, and it will bring forth fruit. Paul was grateful that they had heard the gospel, because he wanted every man to hear it. (1:28)

B. Grateful They Believed In Jesus Christ. Vs.4.

1. Hearing the Word or gospel spawns faith. Romans 10:17.
2. It is possible to hear and not believe.
3. Those that both hear and believe in Jesus, receive the gift of eternal life. John 3:14-18.
4. Be sure you understand that believing is more than intellectual agreement or emotional concern. Believing involves the mind, emotions and the will.

C. Grateful That They Were Discipled. Vs. 7

1. Epaphras was a faithful minister. He did more than give them the gospel by which they were saved, he taught or disciplined them.
2. The word "learned" is related to the word disciple. It is the same word Jesus used in Matthew 11:29, when He said, "Learn of Me."
3. The commission of the church involves evangelism, baptism and teaching or discipling. Matthew 28:19-20.
4. To merely win people to Christ and then leave them would allow them to be open to every form of false teaching.

D. Grateful That They Were Faithful To Jesus. Vs. 2a, 6.

1. The seed of the gospel had been sown in their hearts and now they brought forth fruit.
2. When we are faithful to read God's Word, serve in the church, pray, our fruit will manifest itself.
3. A faithful Christian is one pictured as a fruitful tree. Psa. 1:1-3.

III. PRAYER FOR GROWTH. Vs. 9-12.

A. Prayer For Knowledge. Vs. 9.

1. To know and understand the gospel is great, but once we have understood and accepted the gospel, we should increase our

knowledge of God's Word and will.

2. Newborn Christians are babes in Christ and must begin to grow. The word "filled" means to be controlled by.
3. We increase our knowledge by faithful study of God's Word. II Timothy 2:15, Acts 17:11.
4. We increase our knowledge by exercising or applying those things we have learned. Hebrews 5:11-14. Witnessing is a good way to exercise knowledge.
5. We increase in knowledge when we hear the voice of the indwelling Spirit of God. I Corinthians 2:9-10,13.

B. Prayer For Obedience. Vs. 10

1. There should never be a separation between learning and living.
2. The words "walk" and "work" express the application of head knowledge. This order is important, first wisdom, then walk, then work. We cannot work for God unless we are walking with Him, but we cannot walk with Him if we are ignorant of His will.
3. Notice the description of the believers walk.
 - * Worthy - Does your life adorn the grace of God?
 - * Pleasing - Is your life lived to please the Lord, obedient to His will?
 - * Fruitful - Does your life manifest the fruits of the Spirit? Do you reproduce your life in others?
 - * Increasing - Is your spiritual growth stunted? You can be 30 years old in the Lord, yet be 3 years old spiritually.

C. Prayer For Character. Vs. 11-12.

1. You can have Bible knowledge but yet lack in Christian character. You can have service yet have no character.
2. Notice the hallmarks of character:
 - * Patience - This is endurance when circumstances are difficult. Patience is endurance in action. Too many Christians quit when problems come rather than continue their work.

* Long-Suffering - This word means self-control or restraint, and is opposite of revenge. Patience concerns circumstances while long-suffering concerns people. God is long-suffering II Peter 3:9. This is the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22.

* Joyfulness - This joy is independent of circumstances and people. Paul wrote the joyful epistle of Philippians while in jail, and facing death.

* Thankfulness - Thankfulness is opposite of selfishness. The thing that should make us continually joyful and thankful is that God has made us "meet" or fit, qualified for heaven itself. Our salvation is the greatest source of joy and thankfulness.

Of course, all this is possible because of Jesus Christ, the Preeminent One!

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST'S PREEMINENCE

Lesson Two

Text: Colossians 1:13-20

In the Scriptures there are many passages which speak of Jesus Christ as the supreme, preeminent one. Such passages are: John 1:1-14, Hebrews 1:1-4, and Revelation 1:1-8, 12-18. Our text is another section of God's Word that magnifies Jesus Christ as preeminent. Let us notice the areas of His greatness.

I. AS OUR SAVIOUR Vs. 13-14.

The greatest problem of man is his sin; and the greatest need therefore was a Saviour. Paul expresses what Christ did for us as our Saviour.

A. He Delivered Us. Vs. 13a.

1. To be delivered means to be rescued, just as a person is rescued from drowning by a lifeguard.
2. When we were saved, we were rescued from the power and control of Satan. II Tim. 2:25-26.
3. The lost are the children of wrath, whose father is Satan. Eph. 2:3, John 8:44.
4. Had we not been rescued by our Saviour our destination would be the same as Satan's.
5. This deliverance is three fold. II Cor. 1:10 Past Regeneration - Penalty of Sin John 5:24, Present Sanctification - Power of Sin Phil. 2:12-13. Future Glorification - presence of Sin Phil. 3:20-21.

B. He translated us. vs. 13B.

1. The word translated, means to change, remove, turn away or to put.
2. Jesus not only delivered us from death and the power of Satan, but He put us into His Kingdom or Family. (Notice the term church is not present, nor included. Salvation places us in the Kingdom of God, the Family of God, not His Church.)
3. The Kingdom of His dear Son, or Son of love is the realm of His

rulership. We are no longer servants of Satan. Rom. 6:16-20.

4. This Kingdom is one of love, light, righteousness, care and protection. Literally, we are "in Christ."
5. This translation comes through the new birth. We are indwelt by the Spirit of God, and become new creatures in Christ. II Cor. 5:17.

C. He Redeemed Us. Vs. 14a.

1. Redeemed means to buy back, to pay a ransom.
2. Jesus met the demands of the Law by His life, death and resurrection.
3. On the cross, Jesus purchased our redemption with His own blood. I Peter 1:18-20.
4. Since we are redeemed, we are not our own, but God's. This brings a responsibility to live our lives pleasing to Him, Vs. 10. We should glorify God in body, soul and spirit. I Cor. 6:15-20, II Cor. 5:14-15.

D. He Has Forgiven Us. Vs. 14b.

1. The word forgiven means to cancel a debt.
2. Jesus has removed our debt of sin by His precious blood.
3. Such forgiveness is not deserved, but comes by the grace of God.
4. The forgiveness is complete. Forgiven sins are forgotten by God. Micah 7:18-19. Psalm 103:12.
5. Forgiveness is continual. Saved people still sin. I John 1:6-10.

II. AS OUR CREATOR. Vs.15-17.

A. His Pre-existence. Vs.15.

1. The term "firstborn" does not mean that Christ is the first to be created by God. Christ is not a created being. Firstborn implies position or place. He has all rights of the firstborn because of His prominent position over creation.
2. Jesus Christ is above and before all things. John 1:1-2.
3. He is co-existent, co-eternal with God the Father.

B. His Portrait. Vs.15a.

1. The word "image" means the exact representation. Just as a stamp or a die reproduces an image of itself, Jesus is the exact representation of God. Hebrews 1:3.
2. To see Jesus was to see the Father. John 14:9.
3. Jesus revealed God whose essence is invisible, to us. He brought God up close and personal. John 1:18.

C. His Prominence. Vs. 15b-16.

1. The word "for" in verse 16 could be translated "because". Jesus Christ is the firstborn of all because He created all things.
2. Jesus created all things. John 1:3, Hebrews 1:2b.
3. All things were created for Him. Jesus is the Sphere in which they exist, the Agent through which they come into being, and the One for whom they were made.
4. We are created for Him and therefore our purpose is to please Him and bring Him glory. Col. 1:10, I Cor. 10:31.

D. His Power. Vs. 17

1. The word "consist" means to hold together.
2. Jesus was before the world, He created the world, and He sustains it. Hebrews 1:3..."...upholding all things by the word of His power."
3. He holds the physical world together:
 - * rotation of the earth
 - * orbits of each planet
 - * tilting of the earth's axis
 - * the atom...etc.
4. He holds the spiritual world together. II Thess. 2:6-7.

III. As Head Of The Church Vs. 18.

The word church here is used in the institutional sense. We speak of the dog as being man's best friend, understanding there are many dogs, not one big dog. Jesus is the head of the church, which means the head of every local body. As

our head, He is:

A. The Institutor Of The Church.

1. The word "beginning" means originator.
2. Jesus is the one who built His Church. Matt. 16:18, Mark 3:13-14.
3. We trace our beginning as Baptist back to Christ.

B. The Empowerment Of The Church.

1. It is by the resurrection power and authority of Christ that we accomplish our commission. Matthew 28:18-20.
2. The church was empowered on the day of Pentecost.
3. Our power and authority comes from our Head. John the Baptist received his authority to prepare the way for the Church from God.

C. Instructor Of The Church.

1. As the preeminent one, Christ rules or leads His churches.
2. Though we teach congregational rule, we should seek Christ's leadership in all things.
3. When the church replaced Judas, they cast lots to determine God's will. Acts 1:23-26. The church at Antioch prayed to know the will of God before they sent out missionaries. Acts 13:2-3.

IV. As The Beloved Of The Father. Vs. 19-20.

Jesus is the beloved of the Father, the Son of God. 1:13b, "it pleased the Father."

A. Beloved Attributes.

1. All the powers and attributes of God were present in Jesus Christ.
2. Christ is the essence and image of God.
3. Jesus was fully and completely God. Col. 2:9.

B. Beloved Actions.

1. Jesus was beloved of God because He performed the will of His Father.
2. Jesus gave Himself and by His blood we are reconciled to God.

PROVING CHRIST'S PREEMINENCE

Lesson Three

Text: Colossians 1:20-29.

INTRODUCTION: After presenting Christ as the preeminent one, Paul speaks of his own personal ministry. When we see Jesus Christ as Lord of all, it should reveal our need to serve Him and do His will. Christ is revealed as Lord in our lives by our obedience and walk. Paul's ministry involved three areas.

I. SHARING THE GOSPEL. Vs. 20-23.

Verse 23, reveals that Paul first and foremost was a minister of the gospel. "be not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye have heard...whereof I Paul am made a minister." This was supreme in the mind of Paul. His ministry was to share the good news to all men. I Cor. 1:17-18, Act 9:15. Why? This was the ministry of reconciliation, to reconcile means to change. Through the gospel, man was restored in fellowship to God.

A. The Provision Of Reconciliation. Vs. 20, 22a.

1. Paul makes it clear that reconciliation is made possible by the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.
2. It is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ (vs. 20), and His broken body (vs. 21) that we are able to be reconciled to God.
3. Reconciliation is only limited because of those who reject the gospel. God's blood and broken body are sufficient to reconcile all to Himself. Vs. 20.

B. Reconciliation And Our Past. Vs. 21.

1. Here we see the need for a changed relationship.
2. When we were lost, we were alienated from God. To be alienated is to be estranged or separated. We were outside the realm of His blessing and salvation. Eph. 2:12.
3. Not only were we estranged from God, we were actively hostile to God. Romans 5:10.
4. The carnal mind is opposed to God. Romans 8:5-8.

5. It is through the gospel, the message of reconciliation that we were restored to God through Jesus Christ.

C. The Purpose Of Reconciliation. Vs. 22.

1. We are reconciled so that we may become:
 - * Holy - which means to be set apart. God did not reconcile us so that we could continue as rebels. To be a holy vessel is to be a usable vessel.
 - * Unblamable - means without blemish. We are as God's children to be morally clean. Our standard of living is above the standard of the world.
 - * Unreprovable - means free from accusation. Our living should be free from changes by the world. This does not mean we are perfect, but that there are no serious charges that could ruin our effectiveness in sharing the gospel.
2. So many Christians fail to see the need of living such a life.

D. The Proof Of Reconciliation. Vs. 23.

1. This is not the merit of our reconciliation, that has already been stated by Paul. Here is the visible proof of the inward change.
2. "Continuance in faith" - Those that continue in their faith, validate their salvation.
3. "Grounded and settled" - These are people that are steadfast in doctrine and purpose. They are not easily moved away from their knowledge and service.
4. "Hope of the gospel" - These people live for eternity in light of Christ' coming.
5. We are justified by our faith alone, but our works prove what has happened in our hearts. James 2:18-26.

II. SUFFERING FOR THE GOSPEL. verse 24-25

Paul recognized that it was necessary not only to share the gospel, but if needs be to endure hardship and pain for the gospels sake. This is spoken even as

Paul was in prison.

A. The Rejoicing.

1. Paul was not griping because he was to encounter hardship and pain.
2. He rejoiced to be afforded the opportunity to serve his Lord, the preeminent one.

B. The Reasons.

1. Why suffer? To share in the sufferings of Christ. Phil. 3:10, I Cor. 1:5, 4:8-10.
2. "To fill up" or fill up in turn, that which is "behind", or left over or to follow the sufferings of Christ.
3. Paul was taking his turn in sharing the afflictions of Christ. Considering all that Christ endured and suffered to bring about our reconciliation, the least we can do is share in them.
4. Paul also suffered to sustain the body of Christ. At one time he sought to persecute the church Act 8:1-3.
5. Now he seeks to perpetuate the churches. Are you willing to endure hardships and pain to sustain your church?

C. The Responsibility.

1. Paul considered it not only a joy to suffer for Christ, but his duty given by God. Acts 9:15-16.
2. He desired to fulfill God's word or command to him.
3. Most Christians will not share, much less suffer for Christ.

III. STRIVING FOR THE GOSPEL. Vs. 26-29.

Paul worked fervently to reveal what was once a mystery. The Old Testament saints knew of the promised Kingdom but were ignorant of the Church Age. Although Jesus was rejected by His people, crucified and risen, He has not abandoned His promised Kingdom for Israel. God has now chosen to use the Gentiles to carry the gospel. He has brought both Jews and Gentiles together in His church. Later, after the Church age, rapture, tribulation and second coming,

Christ's earthly Kingdom and reign will be established. Paul was a missionary to the Gentiles and he strove to reveal what was once a secret. How?

A. By Preaching. Vs. 28.

1. Preaching of the gospel is an effective way to win and warn the lost. I Cor. 1:18,21.
2. By preaching, the Word of God is broadcast to the world.

B. By Teaching. Vs. 28.

1. Paul not only preached, but he taught.
2. Teaching is more individual and personal.
3. Paul was available to instruct in wisdom maturing the believer.

C. By Labor. Vs. 29.

1. To labor means to grow weary.
2. It is labor to teach and preach God's Word. We can grow weary in the work, but we should never grow weary of the work.
3. It requires spiritual strength from God to strive for the gospel.

CHRIST'S PREEMINENCE DEFENDED

Lesson Four

Text: Colossians 2:1-10

Introduction: Paul now turns his attention toward those that would lead the Colossians away from the doctrine of Christ's preeminence. In this chapter he gives three warnings to the church: 1) warning against philosophy, vs. 4, 8. 2) warning against legalism, vs. 16. 3) warning against mystics and man-made disciplines, vs. 18. Each of these represented a threat to this church and no doubt had already made inroads into its membership. This lesson deals with the first of these three warnings.

CHRIST ABOVE PHILOSOPHY

Text: Colossians 2:1-10.

I. THE CONCERN. Vs. 1-3.

Though Paul had never seen them, nor they him, he was greatly concerned for them. The word "conflict" means to strive, as in prayer. Paul prayed for the Colossians and those at Laodicea because he feared they would be drawn away from Christ. He had this same concern for the church at Corinth. II Cor. 11:1-4. Paul's concern was three fold:

A. Peace In Christ. Vs. 2a.

1. Paul desired for them to remain unified in Christ.
2. He knew the philosophies of man could cause division in a church.
3. This had happened in the church at Corinth. I Cor. 1:10-13.
4. It is the love of Christ that brings us together. The gospel had endeared Paul to these people, though they had never met. Vs.1

B. Perception In Christ. Vs. 2b.

1. Paul was concerned that they might fully understand. "full assurance of understanding".
2. To understand means to put together, or to be enlightened.
3. Christ is the key to understanding all things. Through Christ what was once a mystery is now placed together. Christ revealed what

was once a type or shadow. How wonderful to live in our day and see so much revealed!

4. We can understand a lot of things.
 - * understand Christ's love. Ephesians 3:19.
 - * understand salvation. I John 5:13.
 - * understand the security of the believer. II Tim. 1:12

C. Provision In Christ. Vs. 3.

1. Why entertain the questions and philosophies of the world?
2. In Christ we have a treasure chest of knowledge and wisdom. The Bible is God's written word which reveals the Living Word, Jesus Christ. It is the unsearchable riches of Christ. Eph. 3:8.
3. There are no Bible scholars, we are all at best students of the Word.

II. THE CAUTION. Vs. 4,8a.

Here Paul cautions them against men that would draw them away from such things afforded in Christ. How?

A. Deceitful Words.

1. To beguile means to deceive.
2. Satan is the father of the lie, and will deceive all he can. These men will say one thing and mean another. They will use words that you know, but have their own meaning.
3. At first such philosophies are seemingly harmless, yet at the last they are destructive.

B. Persuasive Speech. "enticing words"

1. The arguments of such men are sometimes persuasive.
2. A weak Christian that does not know his or her doctrine can be overcome from such words. Romans 16:17-18.
3. Most of the time these people know their arguments better than we know our own doctrine.

C. Captive Words. Vs. 8a.

1. To spoil means to take prey or to capture.
2. Such proponents of false teaching can undermine your faith and capture your allegiance. II Tim. 3:5-6.

III. THE CORRUPTION. Vs. 8.

The corruption these are peddling is under the guise of philosophy. The word philosophy means "to love wisdom," therefore it is the love or pursuit of wisdom. Throughout history, man has pursued his fascination with wisdom. Philosophy is an effort to determine the ultimate causes in the earth and the universe. Such as:
 * what caused what is? * where is it going? *why is what is? * what is its intent and purpose? Most philosophers deny the existence of God, or at best refer to His existence in a general sense. Paul described their philosophy in two phrases.

A. The Tradition Of Men.

1. Tradition means to hand down.
2. Philosophy follows after the tradition of man. A study of philosophy reveals that almost all philosophers build upon other philosophers.
3. The important thing about any teaching is its origin. Did it come from God or man? I Peter 1:18. Gal. 1:6-9.
4. The Catholic faith is a faith based upon the traditions of man rather than the Word of God.

B. The Rudiments Of The World. Vs. 8.

1. This phrase means "things in a column or things in a row, "ABC's, elementary things."
2. To return to philosophy would be to cast away the natural, mature teaching of the Bible for the infantile poverty-stricken opinions of an immature religion.
3. Philosophy gives questions with no answers, while God is the definite answer to all questions.

IV. THE COMMITMENT. Vs. 5-7.

How are we to withstand such an attack? We must be progressive in our Christian life. Our lives should evidence commitment to grow and learn of Christ.

A. The Need For Progress

1. It is important to be mature in Christ, lest we be deceived, persuaded or captured by Satan.
2. We should be able to spot false teaching at first glance.
3. Are you increasing? Colossians 1:10b.

B. The Nature of Progress

Paul was good to use several pictures to help us visualize this commitment to progress.

1. An Army. verse 5. The terms "order" and "steadfastness" are military terms. The child of God should be disciplined and solid in resistance.
2. A Pilgrim. verse 6. Our walk is one of faith. We began our walk with Christ, and we should end our walk with Christ. Hebrews 12:2a.
3. A Tree. verse 7a. "Rooted" is an agricultural word. We should be trees, not tumbleweeds tossed by every wind of doctrine. Ephesians 4:14.
4. A Building. "Built up" is an architectural term. We are built upon the sure foundation of Jesus Christ. From these we are to grow, to be built up in the things of God.
5. A School. verse 7b. "Taught" is an educational term. Satan has a hard time deceiving a schooled Christian. They are established in the truth.
6. A River. verse 7. "Abounding" suggests a river overflowing its banks. As a river, we should run deep and overflowing. A thankful spirit is a sign of maturity.

V. THE COMPLETION. verses 9-10.

A. Christ Is Complete.

1. The word "complete" means to fill up, or to be full.
2. Christ was fully man. He had a physical body.

3. The gnostics taught that Christ could not have had a real body. I John 4:2-4.
4. Jesus became fully man to bear my sin.
5. Christ was fully God. In Him the divine nature and attributes of God dwelt.
6. He was the God-Man.

B. We Are Complete In Christ.

1. We need nothing more than Jesus.
2. Regeneration is in Him.
3. Justification is in Him.
4. Sanctification is in Him.
5. Glorification is in Him.

CHRIST'S PREEMINENCE DEFENDED

Lesson Five

Text: Colossians 2:11-23

I. CHRIST ABOVE LEGALISM. verses 11-17.

A. The Falsehood

1. Evidently there were some that taught a rigid adherence to the Law in order to be saved, or to become more spiritual.
2. Physical circumcision was such a law. verse 11. Circumcision was a sign of God's covenant with the Jewish people. This rite was never intended to impart grace.
3. These teachers also insisted on abstinence from certain foods and observance of special days. verse 16.

B. The Failure.

1. Truth is, the law never saved or justified anyone. Romans 8:1-4.
2. The law is an excellent standard of conduct, but it condemns, rather than comforts. Romans 7:12-13.
3. The law reveals our sin and points us to Christ. Gal. 3:24.

C. The Fulfillment. verse 17.

The fact is Christ is preeminent; he did what the law could not do. In the following verses Paul points out four things Christ did for us:

1. Circumcised In Him. verse 11. To those who are saved, Christ performs spiritual circumcision upon the heart. Physical circumcision was only a shadow of the true. Note the contrast:

Jews

external surgery

part of the body

done by hands

no spiritual help in overcoming sin

Romans 2:25-29

Believers

internal - the heart

the whole "body of sin"

done without hands

enables them to overcome

sin

2. Alive in Him. verses 12-13. The law reveals our sin, and the wages

of sin is death. Before we trusted Christ, we were dead in trespasses and sins. Literally dead to God. Baptism is the picture of what happens to us when we are saved. Romans 6:3-14. Jesus lived, died and arose for us, now we are alive in Him, dead to sin, to walk in newness of life. All this is accomplished by faith in the operation of God. The same power that lifted Jesus from the grave, cleanses us from our sins and trespasses.

3. Free in Him. verse 14. Jesus not only took the law to the cross and nailed it there, forever out of the way, but He made the law of no affect. The Law was against us because we could never meet its demands. Through the perfect life of Jesus and His shed blood, Jesus cancelled a debt we could not pay. We are now free from the law. Romans 6:14, 7:6. This does not mean we are lawless, but we no longer live in fear of its curse. A new law is written on the fleshly tables of the heart, rather than in tables of stone.
4. Victorious In Him. verse 15. On the cross and up from the grave, Jesus not only conquered our sin, but Satan himself. The fate of Satan and all of those with him has been sealed. He stripped the forces of Satan of their power over the saved. The cross was a great victory and we are victorious because of it.

II. CHRIST ABOVE MYSTICS AND MAN MADE DISCIPLINES. verses 18-23.

Paul goes on to warn them of others that would remove them from the preeminence of Christ.

A. Their Practices. verses 18, 20b, 21.

1. These men were practicing two things.
2. The worship of angels and penetration of the spirit world. These people had visions, made contact with angels, and opened themselves to all kinds of demonic activity. Satan can counterfeit any kind of experience.
3. The practice of self-denial and mortification. By this they hoped to

sanctify the soul.

B. The Pretense.

1. These men made a show of being spiritual and were feeding their pride. verses 18b, 23. This was false humility.
2. The Eastern Gurus make a show of spirituality, while they fill their pockets.

C. The Promotion. verse 22.

1. Remember it is important to consider the origin of every truth.
2. These practices and beliefs have an earthly origin.
3. If it does not come from or agree with the Bible, forget it!

D. The Problem.

1. A Christian that gets involved in such things will not lose his salvation, but can lose rewards. verses 18a.
2. The word "beguile" means to declare unworthy of a prize. God will not honor or reward such activity.
3. Such activities remove us from the Head, Jesus Christ, and His body the church. verse 19.

CHRIST'S PREEMINENCE DEMONSTRATED

Lesson Six

Text: Colossians 3:1-17

Introduction: In Chapter 1, Paul declares the doctrine of Christ's preeminence, in Chapter 2, he defended Christ's preeminence and now in a practical way Paul reveals our duty to demonstrate Christ's preeminence. How?

I. SEEK THE HEAVENLY. verses 1-4.

We must always seek the heavenly. Too often Christians live by the standards of the world. Christ should be preeminent in our lives as we set our affection upon Him.

A. His Life. verse 4a. "who is our life"

1. Paul said for me to live is Christ. Phil. 1:21.
2. Christ is our life. Life is what you are alive to.
*Children come alive when they hear of toys, candy and Christmas.
*Teens come alive when you discuss cars, money, and dating.
3. As Christians, we should be alive to Christ.

B. His Death. verse 3a.

1. Christ died for our sin breaking its penalty, and unto sin breaking its power.
2. To die means to separate from. When we die to sin, we separate ourselves from the earthy things that would promote its presence in our lives.
3. We still sin, but no longer should it rule and reign in our lives. Romans 6:6-14.

C. His Resurrection. verse 1

1. Just as we are dead to sin; we are alive to God.
2. The resurrected life is a new life. Romans 6:4
3. The resurrected life is a victorious life. I John 5:4-5.
4. The resurrected life is a power filled life. Phil. 3:10

D. His Identity. verse 3b.

1. Jesus and the Father are one. This is the place of unity, satisfaction and security.
2. Our life is hid in Christ. We are secure in Christ who is in God. Romans 8:31-39
3. Our security does not come from the world or its system, but from Christ.

E. His Glory. verse 4b, 1b.

1. Christ is glorified as he sits on the right hand of God, a position of honor, power and authority.
2. We have also been glorified, Romans 8:30, although it has not yet been revealed.
3. When Christ returns, we will be glorified with Him.
4. We get our glory from Christ, things above, not from this world.

II. SLAY THE EARTHY. verse 5-9.

The Word of God contains both the positive and the negative. Here Paul speaks to specific sins that the believer is to mortify. Mortify means to put to death. We are to actively do battle against the flesh.

A. Sensual Sins. verse 5

1. Fornication - this refers to sexual immorality in general. Such sins are ruining the effectiveness of many Christians.
2. Uncleaness - lustful impurity that is connected with luxury and loose living.
3. Inordinate affection - state of mind that excites sexual impurity.
4. Evil concupiscence - base evil desires.
5. Covetousness - Paul also lists covetousness as a sensual sin. This is the sin of wanting more, never satisfied. Covetousness is idolatry, because it puts things in the place of God.

B. Social Sins. verse 8

1. Anger, wrath and malice are sins of bad attitudes towards others.

These are evidenced by violent outbursts of anger. Such people rejoice at the trouble and misfortune of others.

2. Blasphemy - is slanderous speech such as gossip.
3. Filthy communication is foul speech, coarse humor, obscene language, or profanity.
4. Lying or misrepresentation of the truth. "Half a fact, is a whole lie." Paul pictures the believer as "putting off" these deeds as one, takes off a garment. For these sins to be present in the believer's life is to identify with the children of disobedience. (Who set their affections upon the earth.)

III. STRENGTHEN THE CHRISTLY. verses 10-14

A. The Instruction. verse 10a

1. Not only are we to put off the former things, the earthly things, but we are to put on the new man.
2. Every saved person has two natures, and the strongest will be the one we nourish the most. I Peter 3:3-4.
3. It's not enough to "put off", we must "put on".

B. The Image. verses 10b-11

1. The image or pattern for our development is Christ. We are to be conformed to His Image. Romans 8:29.
2. Other Christians will fail and do not always provide the best image. II Cor. 10:12.
3. No matter what our background, economic, social, cultural, or nationality, we are made one in Christ. We are to bear His image.
4. Notice the characteristics of this image.

*Elect - chosen of God. God has chosen to redeem mankind. We are saved by our choice, and His choice to offer His Son, Jesus Christ.

*Holy - set apart. We are kept clean so to be used of God for His glory.

*Loved - we are the beloved of God. This love is unconditional and ever present. Romans 8:37-39

*Forgiven - verse 13. Our sins are put away by Jesus Christ.

C. The Inclusion. verses 12-14

1. Paul then names things that we are to put on.

2. Put on:

*Mercies - feelings of compassion, affection and sympathy. The Greeks identified the place of affection in the intestine or bowels, while we see them in the heart.

*Kindness - benevolence, good deeds towards others.

*Humbleness of mind - the mind that thinks of others first rather than himself. Phil. 2:3-4

*Meekness - power under control, gentle

*Longsuffering - literally long tempered.

*Forbearance - to hold back. God is forbearing towards sinners in that He holds back His judgment.

*Love - this ties all virtues together. If love exists, all other virtues will follow.

IV. SECURE THE HARMONY. verses 15-17

A. Ruled By Peace. verse 15

1. To rule is an athletic term which means to preside. The peace of God is the umpire of our hearts.

2. We should live our lives so that God's peace is sustained in our hearts.

3. Ungodliness breaks the peace of God.

B. Regulated By The Word. verse 16

1. We should be full of God's Word.

2. God's Word will direct and sustain our lives. Psalms 119:9, 11, 105

C. Rejoicing In Song. verse 16

1. A singing heart is a merry heart.

2. Spiritual songs uplift and instruct us.
3. Spiritual singing goes in three directions:
 - *inward - to himself
 - *outward - to others
 - *upward - to God

D. Reverency His Name. verse 17

1. Every work and word of the child of God should bring honor to the name we bear.
2. Bearing the name of Jesus is not only a privilege but a great responsibility.

E. Remembering His Goodness. verses 15b, 17b

1. To be unthankful is a sin.
2. If peace rules our hearts, praise will be on our lips.

CHRIST'S PREEMINENCE DEMONSTRATED IN THE HOME

Lesson Seven

Text: Colossians 3:18-21

Introduction: Jesus should have first place in every aspect of our lives. The home that makes Christ preeminent is building upon a solid foundation. One out of two homes today are destroyed by divorce because they fail to build upon the proper foundation. Psalms 127:1 "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh, but in vain." Paul now addresses the home and names the ingredients that make a strong and godly home.

I. WIVES - SUBMISSION verse 18

The wives are to submit to their husbands. Submission here does not mean slavery or subjugation. Several things are included here.

A. Respect

1. A submissive wife is one that shows respect to her husband. Eph. 5:33
2. Problems come when husbands and wives fail to demonstrate respect for each other in public. Disagreements will come, but there is a proper place, time, and method to settle such things.
3. Sara showed this respect to her husband, Abraham. I Peter 3:5-6

B. Order

1. The word "submission" is a military term and means "to arrange under rank".
2. Everything must have order or a chain of command if it is to function properly. ie. the government, military, business, church, home.
3. God has given a definite order or chain of command to the home in I Cor. 11:3. This order is to give stability to the family unit.
1st - God
2nd - Christ
3rd - Man

4th - Wife

5th - Children

4. This order does not mean that the woman is inferior to the man. She is not to be a door mat. If so, then Christ would be inferior to God the Father, because He is listed as subject to God the Father.
5. Before God, man and woman are equal, but in the home and church there must be this order. Gal. 3:25-29

D. Devotion

1. This attitude of submission is based upon love and not fear. Titus 2:4
2. The wife should be devoted to her husband, as she is to the Lord.
3. There should be a mutual admiration club between the husband and wife.

E. Obedience Titus 2:5

1. Obedience is to submit without question.
2. The wife must conform to the headship if she is to seek God's blessings upon her home.
3. God's Word is our final authority.
4. This role of submission does not mean to exclude a spirit of cooperation, compromise or companionship. The wife and husband are one flesh, heirs together of the grace of life. I Peter 3:7.

II. HUSBANDS - LOVE verse 19

The first response of the modern day woman to God's chain of command is wrath. "He will run over me and treat me as some piece of furniture", she would say. But God has checks and balances. The husband is required to love his wife with the "agape" love of God. This love is not the shallow affection of mankind, but the deep, endless love that Christ has for us. Such love includes:

A. Sacrifice

1. Agape love is a sacrificing love.
2. Jesus exemplified this love for His church. Eph. 5:25

3. A husband that has this love for his wife will give and sacrifice himself for her.
4. The attributes of this love are listed in I Cor. 13:4-7

B. Service

1. Jesus came not to rule or dominate but to serve. Matt. 20:25-28
2. The mind of Christ is to serve others and think of them first. Phil. 2:3-8
3. Agape love gives and gives. John 3:16; Eph. 5:25
4. The husband demonstrates his love for his wife by giving, serving and nourishing her.
5. A good husband is sensitive to the needs of his wife. He is considerate and will care for her. He will wash a few dishes, change a dirty diaper, etc...

C. Selflessness

1. The husband loves his wife as himself. Eph. 5:28-29
2. A good husband will cherish his mate.
3. When problems arise, he will not grow bitter and throw a fit, as a selfish child. As head of the home the husband is to rule by love and set the example in resolving conflict.

III. CHILDREN - OBEY verses 20-21

A. Their Responsibility

1. Children have a responsibility to honor and obey their parents.
2. To honor and obey is to prepare children for life. Everyone must operate under authority and be obedient to those over them.
3. The measure of this responsibility of obedience is "all things".
4. The motive is to please the Lord.

B. Their Rights

1. Verse 21 speaks of the rights of children.
2. Every child has a right to:
*be born

- *be raised in a Christian home
 - *have godly parents that will teach them God's Word
3. The word "fathers" in verse 21 could be translated "parents".
Children have a right not to be provoked or discouraged.
 4. The following are ways to provoke children:
 - *automatically say "no" without consideration
 - *to not listen to children
 - *to discipline in anger rather than with love
 - *to be impatient
 - *to be inconsistent
 - *to compare children
 - *to use children as weapons in marital conflicts
 - *to be too busy and not take time for children
 5. Discouraged children are prey for Satan and the world.

CHRIST'S PREEMINENCE AT WORK

Lesson Eight

Text: Colossians 3:22-4:1

Introduction: Paul turns his attention from the home to the slave-master relationship. Most homes had slaves and in many cases both slave and master were Christians. Slavery was an established institution in Paul's day. Many slaves were well educated and carried great responsibilities in the homes of the wealthy. It seems the churches and the New Testament writers did not seek to oppose or destroy this practice but rather sought to change it through improved attitudes of both slaves and masters. Slave master relationships are discussed in I Cor. 7:21, Eph. 6:5-9, I Tim. 6:1-2, Titus 2:9-10, and Philemon 10-17. As Christians both master and slave meet on equal ground and mutual respect. Though we do not operate under a slave, master system, we do have employer, employee relationships. In our lesson, we can learn how to improve this vital relationship between employer and employee. Both have responsibilities before God as children of God.

I. SERVANTS verses 22-25

Paul first speaks to the Christian worker and his responsibilities and qualities.

A. Obedience verse 22

1. The Christian worker is to be obedient to those over him. Titus 2:9-10, Eph. 6:5-6, I Tim. 6:1-2
2. As in the home there must be a clear chain of command, often there are too many chiefs and not enough Indians. Some must give orders and some must take orders.
3. A disobedient worker is worthless, unproductive and a shame to God. Matt. 25:24-30
4. A good worker will exhibit obedience in all things and at all times, not just while under observation of the boss.
5. As a Christian worker, he serves two masters, one fleshly and one Heavenly. We should seek to please God, our Heavenly master first and foremost. Our work is under the observation of God at all

times.

6. Our obedience is unto the Lord, not to manipulate men or for a show. There should be no resentment or ulterior motives. Though we are servants to some in the flesh, we are free men to God. I Cor. 7:21-24

B. Work verse 23

1. The word "do" means work. Obedience is to result in work, doing things.
2. God created man to work, and He commands us to do so. II Thes. 3:10-11
3. The Christian is to do his work heartily or with personal interest. We should work with diligence, cheerfully and with a sense of pride.
4. Our work should be done as to the Lord, or worthy of the Lord's favor.
5. We must realize that there is no such thing as a sacred and secular part of our lives. Our whole lives are the Lords. Everything you do should be unto the Lord. verse 17

C. Pay day verses 24-25

1. Every worker looks forward to payday. Some are well paid, while others are grossly under paid.
2. Though weekly pay is a necessity, eternal pay comes from our Heavenly Master. His reward and well done will be worth it all. Matt. 6:19-21, 24, 25:20-21
3. The Lord will reward or rebuke both boss and worker in eternity. There is a dual accountability that is good for both master and servant.

II. MASTER 4:1

Paul now directs his attention to the master or boss. Though the above qualities should be present in the master as well, he gives specific qualifications to the Christian master. Every master should be:

A. Giving

1. A good master is generous to his or her employees. This does not always mean financial retribution, but in person areas as well. John 15:13-15.
2. Raises should be given when they are earned by the worker. A tight fisted boss hurts himself. I Tim. 5:18
3. Jesus is a giving Master. It will pay to serve and follow Him. Mark 10:28-30, Luke 18:29-30

B. Honest

1. To be just means to do what is right. A good boss is honest in his dealings with men. He has integrity.
2. A good boss does not say one thing and then do another. Empty promises are a bad testimony.
3. Business should be conducted openly and above board. II Cor. 8:2-12

C. Fair

1. The term equitable means to be fair, to treat with fairness.
2. A good boss is fair towards his employees.
3. He does not ask more of workers than they can perform.
4. He does not show partiality or favoritism to workers.

C. Accountable

1. A good boss realizes that he also works for another Master.
2. One day all will be held accountable as to how they live their lives.

CHRIST PREEMINENT IN LIFE

Lesson Nine

Text: Colossians 4:2-18

Introduction: As Paul closes his letter to the church at Colosse, he reveals the place Christ should have in each individual life. From our words to our walk, Christ should be alive and evident in our lives.

I. PREEMINENT IN OUR WORDS.

It has been said that talk is cheap, but this is far from the truth. There is great power in words, whether spoken by the saved or the lost. Our words can have a great impact upon others. For every word in Adolph Hitler's book *Mein Kampf*, 125 persons lost their lives in World War II. Our speech is a gift from God, and we should let Christ be preeminent in our speech.

A. Words Of Prayer verses 2-3a

1. Prayer and praise are perhaps the highest uses of the gift of speech.
2. Our prayers should be continual or faithful. This means to be steadfast in your prayer life, do not quit. I Thess. 5:17 says, "Pray without ceasing". If our heart is right with God, there will always be things to pray about.
3. Prayer should have an attitude of watchfulness, "watch and pray". Our prayers should not be a matter of routine, but rather intense. Real, effective prayer demands spiritual energy and alertness. Elijah prayed this way. James 5:16-18
4. Our prayers should be thankful. There is always much to be thankful for in the life of every believer. Prayer is an effective vehicle to express to God and men our thanksgiving. Phil. 4:6
The letter to the Colossians contains a theme of thanksgiving. Col. 1:3, 12:2-7, 3:15, 17, 4:2. As we remember that Paul was in prison, this point is truly a blessing.
5. Last, our prayers should be purposeful. Paul asked them to pray

specifically verse 3a. Too often our prayers are vain repetitions Matt. 6:7. Instead of praying for all the missionaries on the foreign field, pray specifically for one each day. Elijah prayed this way. James 5:17-18

B. Words of Purity verse 6

1. Not only is Paul concerned about our words to God, but also our words to man. He says they should be seasoned with salt.
2. We have heard some describe a foul mouth as "salty speech". This is not the true meaning or purpose of salt.
3. Salt is used to purify or preserve things. Kentucky is known for its salt cured hams. The salt keeps the things that bring decay, away. So should it be with our speech, it should be pure, free from corruption. Eph. 4:29, Col. 3:8. There is no reason or excuse for a filthy mouthed Christian. James 3:10.
4. Salt also seasons our food. Our words should always be seasoned, flavored with grace. Eph. 4:15; I Cor. 13:1. Your words can make the difference in the lives of others. Prov. 15:23; 25:11.

II. PREEMINENT IN OUR WITNESS. verses 3-4

Here Paul reveals his prison ministry to us.

A. Oppression

1. The reason Paul was in prison was because of his witnessing and preaching.
2. Most of us would quit if we were oppressed for witnessing. Though imprisoned for witnessing, Paul is still concerned that he be the witness God wants him to be.
3. Paul spoke of the "mystery of Christ" which always got him in trouble with the Jews. Two parts of this mystery were especially irritating to the Jews.

*first - that Christ was resurrected from the grave. They thought they had rid themselves of this Christ when they crucified Him.

*second - that Christ came to bring salvation to all men, which included the Gentiles.

4. To witness for Christ will still bring oppression from the world. God help us to be like Paul and continue to witness, no matter what comes our way.

B. Opportunity

1. Here's the blessing! Paul did not ask his brethren to pray that the prison doors be opened and he be released. He asked them to pray that doors of opportunity to witness open in prison.
2. It was more important to Paul that he be a faithful witness than a free man. Paul's concern was not for himself, but for those around him.
3. This is the lesson, that we can be a witness anywhere we go. Paul was able to witness to the guards to whom he was chained. Phil. 1:12-14. The word "palace" in verse 13 is praetorium. This was a group of imperial guards distinct from the army of Roman police. Paul's witness was even to the household of Caesar. Phil. 4:22.
4. O that we would seek and pray for opportunities to witness of God's grace.

III. PREEMINENT IN OUR WALK. verse 5

Walk refers to our conduct in daily life.

A. The Inspection Of Our Walk.

1. The term "without" refers to those that are lost, without God's grace, hope, without the family of God. Eph. 2:12.
2. As a prisoner Paul was under the constant surveillance of the guards. They inspected his every move.
3. Our lives come under the observation and inspection of the lost world every day. They have standards and expectations for your life, whether you have any or not.
4. You are the only Bible some people will ever read.

B. The Integrity Of Our Walk.

1. Our walk should be with wisdom or with integrity.
2. To walk in wisdom means to be careful not to say or do anything that would make it difficult to share the gospel.
3. Our lives are either a stumbling block or a stepping stone to Jesus Christ.
4. To walk in wisdom means to take advantage of every opportunity to share Jesus. "Redeeming the time" means buying up the opportunity. We waste too much precious time as God's people.
5. To walk in wisdom means to do our work, pay our bills and keep our promises. II Cor. 4:1-2

IV. PREEMINENT IN OUR WORK. verses 7-18

Paul was a great worker and accomplished great things for God. However he could not have accomplished anything alone, he had help. A good leader will acknowledge those who help in the work.

A. Recognition.

1. Paul takes time to recognize those who have helped him in the ministry.
2. He praises them for their part in the work of God.
3. How important it is to recognize those who are a blessing to us and our work.

*Tych'icus - verses 7-8. A laborer with Paul for several years. (Acts 20:4) He was to carry the letter to the Colossians, and also carried the letter to the Ephesians. (Eph. 6:21-22) How thankful we are that he was faithful to deliver the Word to the churches.

*Ones'imus - verse 9. He was the run-away slave of Philemon, whom Paul had won to Christ, and was now sending back home to Colosse. He would travel with Tychicus and carry a letter from Paul to his master, Philemon.

*Aristar'chus - verse 10. He is mentioned as a leading Christian

during the Ephesian riot. (Acts 19:29) He accompanied Paul (Acts 20:4) and was with him during that terrible storm en route to Rome. (Acts 27:2) What a faithful Christian to stick by Paul through thick and thin.

*Marcus - verse 10. This is none other than John Mark. He was cousin to Barnabas who had a fall-out with Paul years before. (Acts 13:13, 15:36-41). Paul had forgiven Marcus and recommended him to this church. He is now profitable to the work. II Tim. 6:11.

*Jesus - Justus-verse 11. A Jewish believer who was a help and comfort to Paul in his prison days.

*Epaphras - verses 12-13. He was a Gentile and the founder-pastor of the church at Colosse. He was a faithful, godly, prayerful minister. Col. 1:7, 4:12

*Luke - verse 14. A Gentile physician who joined Paul at Troas (Acts 16:10) and later wrote the gospel of Luke and Acts.

*Demas - verse 14. He was a fellow laborer and companion of Luke that later forsook the ministry. II Tim. 4:10.

*Archip'pus - verse 17. This man is encouraged by Paul to continue the ministry God had given him.

B. Relationship

1. It is evident that Paul had a good relationship with those that are listed here. There were no big I's and little U's.
2. Paul identified these as fellow servants, brothers and fellow workers. Though Paul was an apostle, he did not put himself above his brothers in Christ.
3. Christ is the preeminent one, He alone is to be exalted and lifted up above humanity.

