

# Greenhills Community Church, Presbyterian

November 20, 2022,

Supremacy of Christ

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From Paul's letter to Colossians

## Paul Thanks God for the Colossians

3 In our prayers for you we always thank God, the[b] Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, 5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel 6 that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God. 7 This you learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on our[c] behalf, 8 and he has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

9 For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's[d] will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. 11 May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, so that you may have all endurance and patience, joyfully 12 giving thanks to the Father,[e] who has enabled [f] you[g] to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption,[h] the forgiveness of sins.

## The Supremacy of Christ

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, 16 for in[i] him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He himself is before all things, and in[j] him all things hold together. 18 He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. 19 For in him all the fullness of God[k] was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

Paul begins his prayer with thanks to God for the Colossians and he prays through God's power, these people will have strength, endurance, joyful thanks to God. I learned from William Barclay's commentary that the translation of Greek word for endurance here (hupomone) refers not only to the ability to bear things but the ability in bearing them to turn them into glory. Hupomone is the ability to deal triumphantly with anything that life can do to us.

As I was preparing for today's sermon, I read through and studied multiple commentaries one of which, Barclay, describes Paul's purpose in writing this letter and these specific assurances that in Christ there is the fullness of God. During this early time in the history of the church, gnostics or intellectuals were dissatisfied with what they considered the rude simplicity of Christianity. They wished to turn Christianity into a philosophy and to align it with the other philosophies which held the field at that time. These gnostics began with a basic assumption: the assumption that matter is altogether evil, and that spirit is altogether good. They saw Jesus as an intermediary between God and man. Paul needed to reassure them that Christ and the Father are one. In verse 13, Paul thanks God for delivering us all from the kingdom of Satan.

J. Vernon McGee describes this as “We have been translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love. This is the present aspect of the kingdom of God here on earth today. You can’t build the kingdom of God. The only way you can be a part of it is to open your heart and receive Christ as your savior. That translates you into the kingdom of His dear Son.” In verse 14, “not only have we been translated into His kingdom, but we also have forgiveness of sins in Him.” Redemption through Christ. Paul has given thanks to God for these truths: 1) that we are filled with knowledge, 2) we are pleasing to God, 3) we are fruitful in every good work (a fruit-bearing branch), 4) increase in our knowledge of God and 5) we have strength and power produced by the Holy Spirit. God has redeemed us through Christ and forgiven our sins through His blood. Yet even today there are a great many Christians who pray for these things, things we have already been given!

Verses 15-20 intend to address who Christ is. These last verses cover:

- Verse 15 – Christ's relationship to the Father  
We can go back to John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” God is everlasting Father and Christ is the everlasting son. “He came out of eternity and took upon Himself our humanity.” The philosophers of Colosseae thought of a hierarchy of God, that God created a creature just below God, and that creature created a creature just beneath Him, and so on. These were emanations from God. Paul answers that thought by emphasizing that Christ is firstborn of all creation before all creation. Isaiah 9:6 says “For a child has been born for us, a son given to us...” The child is born but the son is given. He came out of eternity and took upon Himself our humanity. He existed before Creation.
- Verse 16,17 – Christ's relationship to creation – Christ being first born is referring to Christ Himself being a Creator not being created and that all things were created FOR Him. The term “first born” refers to a term of honor and also refers to the Messiah. The first-born son had certain privileges in the Biblical world, so also Christ has certain rights in relation to all creation: priority, preeminence, and sovereignty.
- Verse 18, 19 – Christ's relationship to the church – Christ is the head of the body, the Church
- Verse 20 – Christ's relationship to the cross enables’ redemption for our sins only as we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior.

Paul’s whole letter intends to pull the Colossians back to understanding exactly who Jesus Christ is by providing more knowledge.

Think about that for a few minutes. Today, we have our own Bibles from which we can study scripture, and it requires study! When we have questions, we can open our Bibles and search out answers to our questions regarding how we’re expected as Christians to respond and handle issues. During Paul’s time, people had oral teaching and just the beginning of recorded scripture on scrolls that only a few had access to. That’s one of many things today that we can be grateful for that we had nothing to do with.

That’s the primary theme in this letter from Paul, knowledge and the focus is on Christ’s supremacy in creation.