

The Gospel's Power  
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What are the priorities in your life? If you made a list in priority order what or who would you place at the top? I would contend that who or what is in first place on that list will influence everything about how you and I live your lives.

Most of us don't use the word "preeminent" at all in our vocabulary. Sadly, we probably only use the word "supreme" when ordering pizza. As a Bible student you should know those words and what they mean regarding Jesus. In simple terms they mean "first in rank or authority" in other words, #1 or "first place."

If we sum up Paul's letter to the church at Colossae we'd say it's all about Jesus. He must be preeminent, supreme, in first place in the lives of His followers. Paul had to make that point because false teachers were infecting this little congregation with heresy that made Jesus an "also ran" instead of first and only.

Here's the truth that should change us: True followers of Christ will acknowledge His rightful place as FIRST above all creation. Paul's letter explains why Jesus IS FIRST and helps us know how to live with Him in FIRST PLACE in our lives.

Normally we would look at this passage beginning at verse nine. In keeping with what I just said, I'm going to begin with verse 15 on why Jesus is preeminent then we'll go back to verses 9 through 14 to learn how to live with that in mind. Listen to this beautiful passage on the preeminence and supremacy of Christ:

**Colossians 1:15–18 (ESV) — 15** He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. **16** For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. **17** And 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, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

Father, Thank you for giving us eternal life through Christ. Help us to keep Him in FIRST PLACE as we strive to please Him and grow to be more like Him. Amen.

- If you tell someone you believe in God most people will likely say, “that’s nice” or “good for you.” If you talk about having the Holy Spirit of God living inside you, they may think: “that’s weird!” Saying “Jesus is my Lord” may move things in a negative direction. Say Jesus is the only way to eternal life and you’ve just thrown down the gauntlet for a full attack.
- It wasn’t much different in this little church in Colossae in Paul’s day.
- Though Paul had never visited this church, he knew about their faith in Christ and love for people (v.4.) He had also heard of false teaching in their midst.
- Wiersbe: *“The false teachers in Colossae, like the false teachers of our own day, would not deny the importance of Jesus Christ. They would simply dethrone Him, giving Him prominence but not preeminence.”*
- Note: Any cult or false religion always denies the deity of Christ. Some deny Him altogether, others marginalize Him as simply a wise teacher.
- Paul gives a beautiful description of why Jesus is supreme.
- He is “the visible image of the invisible God.” Jesus IS God, period.
- “Firstborn of creation” does NOT mean Jesus was the first created being!
- He existed before creation, and He was the Father’s instrument of creation of everything in the world. Jesus is both God and Creator.
- “Everything was created through Him and for him.” (v.16)
- He “...holds all creation together.” When people sing, “He’s got the whole world in His hands” those hands have nail scars in them. There is no “Mother Nature” running creation, it’s our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
- He “is also the head of the church.” Problems come in our churches and denominations when we don’t operate like Jesus is the head of the church. If your church doesn’t make Jesus

and His commands the focal point of their teaching and their conduct – CHANGE CHURCHES!

- Let me show a little grace (but only a little on this subject.) Christ has delegated church leadership to saved humans with a sin nature. Even the best and most biblical church leaders are flawed. The key is whether there is a track record of that church striving to glorify Christ in how they “do church” and repenting when things are not being done to please Him.
- Jesus is “supreme over all who rise from the dead.” His resurrection makes our resurrection certain if we have trusted Him as Savior and Lord.
- Jesus is creator of everything, sustainer of everything, the head of the church, source of our resurrection, now the best part: He is our redeemer.

**19** For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, **20** and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. **21** And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, **22** he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him...

- The “fullness of God” dwells in Christ. 2:9 says, “For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body.”<sup>ii</sup> Jesus is FULLY GOD.
- Hebrews 10 tells us the sacrifice of bulls and goats couldn’t pay the price to pardon us and reconcile us to God. There had to be a supreme sacrifice. Hebrews 10:12 says, <sup>12</sup> But our High Priest offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then he sat down in the place of honor at God’s right hand.<sup>iii</sup>
- Jesus was the supreme sacrifice for sinners because of His deity.
- <sup>13</sup> He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.<sup>iv</sup>
- Jesus is FIRST because He is the source of our salvation.

- Paul has made the case that Jesus is preeminent, supreme, FIRST. How can you and I live in a way that reflects He is in FIRST PLACE?
- Looking back at verse nine we see a model of how a pastor should pray for their church and how all Christ-followers should pray for each other.

**Colossians 1:9–12 (ESV) — 9** And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, **10** so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; **11** being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy;

- Living with Jesus in first place starts with prayer.
- We should pray to be “filled” with the knowledge of God’s will.
- This speaks to God’s revealed will in scripture more than trying to decide, “should I marry Fred or should I move to Wisconsin.”
- Living with Jesus in first place starts with filling our hearts and minds with the truth of His commands in scripture which are always His will.
- This requires “spiritual” wisdom and understanding. The Holy Spirit was given to provide this for us. **John 14:26 (ESV) — 26** But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.
- This is not just about accumulating knowledge of scripture.
- This spiritual knowledge leads us “to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him.” That’s living our lives like Jesus is in FIRST PLACE.
- Jesus-FIRST living results in “bearing fruit in every good work.”
- In John 15 Jesus said He is the “vine,” the Father is the gardener, and we are the branches. If we’re connected to Jesus, the fruit will look like Him.
- That fruit includes living in a way that pleases Him and doing the things that will bring about His will in this world, which is the ultimate “fruit.”

- If Jesus is first in our life, that cycle of fruit production starts over again.
- Verse 10: we learn to know God better and better. Verse 11: we will be strengthened by his “glorious power.” We will have all the “endurance and patience” we need, and we will be “filled with joy.”
- Notice that doesn’t describe a life of ease with no problems. We will need that endurance and patience for the difficult days, but the good news is when we are strengthened by His “glorious power” we will be “filled with joy” even when things are hard. That’s the supernatural nature of the JESUS FIRST way of living.
- Thoughts about how to acknowledge that Christ is FIRST in our lives?

#### So, What’s the Takeaway?

- It’s not uncommon to see a sign on a machine or a gas pump that says, “Out of Order.” That tells us it doesn’t work – it’s broken!
- People wonder why their Christian life doesn’t seem to match what they read about in scripture. If Jesus is not in first place then things are “Out of Order” and we shouldn’t be surprised that our life in Christ isn’t working.
- To paraphrase Warren Wiersbe, Christ is not simply “prominent,” He is “preeminent!” We can’t call ourselves followers of Christ unless we acknowledge that He is worthy of FIRST PLACE in the world, in His church, and in our daily lives. We don’t “give” Him first place. He’s already there; we just need to acknowledge that truth.
- How do we live in a way that acknowledges Jesus in first place?
- We’ve just seen some very practical steps so here’s the summary: Study His word, ask Him for His guidance and power, strive to grow more and more like Him, then talk about Him a lot.
- I made that last point last because if we’re not living in a manner that would please and glorify Jesus, wearing His name could actually be harmful to His kingdom. Let’s be sure we’re

striving to live in a worthy manner before we put that “fish” on our car bumper!

- Here’s a practical exercise. Before we decide, before we speak, as we plan where we’ll go and how we will conduct ourselves, let’s ask ourselves honestly: Is that living like Jesus is FIRST? Does my conduct show that I believe that Jesus is preeminent as King of Kings and Lord of Lords?
- This week, let’s make it a point to embrace the truth that Jesus is Supreme!

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<sup>i</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [\*The Bible exposition commentary\*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 114). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>ii</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [\*Holy Bible: New Living Translation\*](#) (Col 2:9). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>iii</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [\*Holy Bible: New Living Translation\*](#) (Heb 10:12). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>iv</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Col 1:13–14). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.