

November 16, 2025 (Lesson 11)

CHRIST IS SUPREME

1. **Christ, Creator of All Things** (Colossians 1:1-17)
2. **Christ, Head of the Church** (Colossians 1:18-23)
3. **Christ, Our Hope of Glory** (Colossians 1:24-29)

Central Truth: Christ is supreme over all things and deserves our complete devotion.

Focus: Recognize the supremacy of Christ and trust Him completely.

Evangelism Emphasis: Christ gives hope to those who trust in Him.

Golden Text: “He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:18).

Colossians is part of the Prison Epistles, along with Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon, probably written during Paul’s house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:30-31; summer, AD 62). The Book of Acts records two other times that Paul was imprisoned (Philippi, 16:16-40; Caesarea, chs. 24-26). Epaphras, who apparently founded the church there (Col. 1:7), came to Paul with several concerns for the believers in Colossae of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Paul addressed these concerns with his usual intertwining of theology and application of doctrine. Interestingly, we have no record of Paul ever visiting the church; yet, his influence (apparently from his time in Ephesus, 120 miles west) was so strong that they embraced Paul as one of their spiritual leaders.

The congregation faced serious doctrinal errors that Paul confronted in love. Tragically, these issues are prevalent in modern society: everything is relative; integrating teachings from many religions provides a “better” philosophy; and morality is based on one’s opinion, rather than the Word of God. One of the primary issues was the practice of dabbling with spirituality that is not God-based, but leads to interaction with demonic spirits.

The admonition is very relevant today. It is easy to get distracted or confused with the proliferation of “Christian” teachers, especially those who espouse they alone have some insight not seen by others. Colossians reminds us that our focus must always be on Christ.

1. CHRIST, CREATOR OF ALL THINGS

A. The Redeemer (Colossians 1:1-14)

¹ Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother, ² To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

¹² Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: ¹³ Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: ¹⁴ In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

Paul begins this letter with his customary pattern, introducing himself as the author (v. 1). He is Paul, the messenger “of Jesus Christ” (“apostle”). He is no longer “Saul,” who persecuted the church (see Acts 13:9). His new identity and commission are not from human authorities, but through the divine purpose (“will of God”). He notes Timothy is present with him, who may have served as his assistant or secretary, writing as Paul dictated (cf. Gal. 6:11).

The recipients, the church “at Colossae,” had been called out of darkness and sin to a life of holiness and faithfulness (“saints”) in and through Christ (identity and agency; v. 2). Further, Paul desired for them favor with God that they did not deserve and could not earn (“grace”) and an abiding confidence and inner security that was not dependent on but, rather, transcended all circumstances (“peace”). These were of divine origin because of personal relationship, not human provision (“Father” and “Lord”). Their reputation resulted in thanksgiving and gratitude, and elicited prayer (v. 3).

That reputation included “faith in Christ Jesus” (v. 4). *Faith* is not just mental assent, but demands our belief in God’s ability be lived out daily. As well, they were commended for their love for one another (also, v. 8; see John 13:34-35). Epaphras had brought the Gospel to them (Col. 1:7), which resulted in “hope,” or acting on the eager anticipation of what God had in store for them (v. 5) and produced “fruit” (v. 6). *Fruit* is a natural result of living out the “truth” found in “the grace of

God.” It is not optional (John 15:2), but reveals our character (Matt. 7:17-18) and eternal future (v. 19).

Their faithfulness prompted Paul’s prayer for them (Col. 1:9-14), noting the redemptive provision of God already active in their lives. First, God has “qualified” us as believers (v. 12a NIV). We are chosen by divine intervention to be incorporated into and recipients of (“partakers”) all the benefits (“inheritance”) that are given to the larger body of “saints in light” (v. 12b; 1 Cor. 1:2).

Second, the Father has rescued (“delivered”) us out of the authority (“power”) of hell’s dominion and reach (“darkness,” Col. 1:13; Jude 3). We are no longer part of this earth’s world order, but now belong to the kingdom of Christ, the “beloved Son” (Col. 1:13 NASB).

Third, through faith in Jesus Christ’s salvific work (shedding of His blood) “we have redemption” (v. 14a). We have been rescued from bondage, released from its effects, and set free from its penalty. To further underscore what has been provided, Paul added “even the forgiveness of sins” (v. 14b). This is the opposite of salvation by works. Paul knew some obeyed the Law with a superficial obedience in an effort to produce righteousness (Phil. 3:9). The acceptance of God’s grace in our lives produces fruit as a result of salvation; it does not earn salvation.

§ *Describe the “inheritance” we have as believers in Jesus Christ (vv. 12-14).*

B. The Creator and Sustainer (Colossians 1:15-17)

¹⁵ Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: ¹⁶ For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

The preeminence (first in rank and dignity) of Jesus Christ in creation is addressed (vv. 15-17), using verse 14 as the foundation. This is a hymn or teaching creed (vv. 15-20; also see Phil. 2:5-11). Its Christ-centered value and teaching cannot be underestimated. Paul began with “who is,” speaking of the Son (Col. 1:15). This verse continues the sentence begun in verse 9. For Paul, there

was no distinction between prayer and belief (theology). His theology was founded upon, discovered through, and flowed out of prayer. Simply put, his conduct was based on his theology; his theology was based on prayer; and his prayer was based on his relationship with God. It is a valuable example for us (see Col. 3:16; Heb. 5:12).

Christ is the visible “image of the invisible God,” more than a mere resemblance (Col. 1:15). He is the representation of the reality, for He is God made flesh (or Incarnation). Further, it confirms His active participation in the Trinity. The term *firstborn* has two distinct meanings: (1) literally, one who is born first; (2) one who is distinct in privilege. A misunderstanding of Paul’s usage here led to serious doctrinal errors. Some believed Jesus was a created being; that is, there was a time when He did not exist. This is completely contrary to Scripture (John 1:14; Phil. 2:6). Here, *firstborn* refers to His unique interaction with creation as the exalted One, who reigns supreme (Acts 5:31; Phil. 2:9).

Paul declared Christ is the Agent of all creation and emphasized His supremacy and participation in three ways (Col. 1:16). First, all things were “created” (“called into being”) “by him” (literally, “in” or “within him”), which denotes He is the cause of and the reason for creation (see John 3:16; Rev. 13:8). Second, creation came “through him” (or “because of him”), which emphasizes His agency. Third, this was done “for him,” emphasizing authority and ownership. Notice in Genesis 1:2 we have the Father and the Spirit involved in creation. Now we see the Son was part of the process, revealing the Godhead working in perfect unison to accomplish this event. *Created* means “to bring into existence” and “to bring order out of chaos,” especially in the spiritual realm.

Paul listed a series of entities to emphasize the massive dominion of Christ’s creative activity and authority. All creation is subject to Him, regardless of where it is (“heaven” and “earth”), whether it is seen or not (“visible and invisible”), and regardless of who it is or what spiritual power or earthly position they may possess (“thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities,” Col. 1:16 CSB). They are

all subject to Christ and will answer to Him (Rom. 2:16; 2 Tim. 4:1). Our focus, therefore, must remain on Christ, the One deserving of our worship.

His preeminence and preexistence are further underscored: “He is before all things” (Col. 1:17). This can be interpreted two ways. First, it can mean Christ “existed prior to all things”; that is, creation. This is consistent with John 1:1-3, where we find that prior to the beginning of creation, the Word already existed. Some people question the pre-existence of Christ prior to His birth on earth (Matt. 1:18-25). This thinking is based on faulty theology and improper *exegesis* (in-depth study) of Scripture. Second, it can mean Christ has “preeminence over all things.” The second option is certainly true (see below, Col. 1:18) and has been emphasized in the prior verse. Grammatically, the first translation is preferred here for emphasis. Before “all things” were, He was. Through His power, “all things” (note the repetition of this phrase) have been permanently framed (“consist”). Jesus has been correctly considered the “cosmic superglue” that holds all creation in place (Heb. 1:3). He is the Cornerstone of creation and our Savior (1 Peter 2:4-10).

A Matter of Worship

People treat God’s sovereignty as a matter of controversy, but in Scripture it is a matter of worship.—J. I. Packer

2. CHRIST, HEAD OF THE CHURCH

A. The Fullness of God (Colossians 1:18-21)

¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. ¹⁹ For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; ²⁰ And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. ²¹ And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.

Christ is the “head of the body, the church” (v. 18a). The church is not a denomination, a revival movement, or a building made by hands. It is the body of Christ, which includes the first child of God in history to the last soul saved before the Day of Judgment. Christ gave His life for every soul within the church. He is “the beginning”—the first in authority, power, and dominion (v. 18b). He is the originator of all things. His position was established not only by virtue of who He is, but also what He has accomplished. He alone is “the firstborn from the dead” (v. 18c). Here, “firstborn” emphasizes He was the first to be raised from death’s power and domain. Five individuals were brought back to life before the resurrection of Christ (1 Kings 17:22; 2 Kings 4:32-35; 13:21; John 11:43-44; Luke 7:11-15). They, however, were still subject to death. Christ conquered death once and for all (Rev. 1:18). Thus, by virtue of position (Son of God) and power (resurrection), He has the “preeminence” (Col. 1:18d), which occurs only here; thus, it is reserved solely for Christ, the first and supreme in rank and dignity over everything.

Paul addressed the nature of the Godhead to establish by what right or authority Christ is supreme, as well as revealing Christ’s position and activity in the Trinity (v. 19). “The Father” is not found in the text directly (thus the italics in Bibles), but is clearly there by implication: who else would be “pleased”? This term has been applied to Christ previously (Isa. 42:1, prophetically; Matt. 12:18). It connotes that consent was given, and who but God could do so? It also carries a sense of pleasure or delight by the One giving that consent; thus, it is usually translated as “well pleased.” “Fullness” can be understood as the opposite of something or someone incomplete. In simple terms, Christ could not be any more God than He is by His position, authority, and redemptive work, and this pleases the Father and Spirit.

This is further confirmed by the effect of His activity (Col. 1:20-21). There are four aspects addressed here. First, the redemptive process and provision is founded upon and accomplished

“through the blood” of Christ shed on the cross of Calvary (v. 20b). There is a “scarlet thread” found throughout the Bible (atoning sacrifices; Ex. 12:22-23; Lev. 17:11), but it culminates in Christ (Matt. 26:28; Rom. 5:9).

Second, Paul previously emphasized the redemptive aspect of salvation (freedom from sin’s penalty, Col. 1:14), but now he highlighted the reconciliation we have “by him,” or better, “through him” (v. 20c). *Redemption* (see v. 14) and *reconciliation* are two complementary aspects of salvation. “To reconcile” carries the idea of moving something from one position to an entirely different position. He noted in verse 21 that we were separated from (“alienated”) God and were His “enemies,” or adversaries, because of our sin (“wicked works”). However, because of His blood, we now stand in a position of favor with God.

Third, because of Christ’s blood and reconciliation, we are also in a state of “peace” (v. 20a). This carries two implications: (1) Christ brought peace into existence where none existed previously for God’s “enemies,” making a real relationship possible; (2) this results in an abiding confidence for us as we can now approach God and live without fear (Heb. 4:16).

Fourth, the phrase “all things, unto himself” (Col. 1:20d) raises the issue of comprehensiveness, especially with the reference to “earth” and “heaven.” Some assert it means everyone past, present, and future was reconciled to God through His work. This is “universalism,” or the belief that everyone is redeemed. “All things” is comprehensive, but not all-encompassing. Scripture declares creation awaits release from the curse of sin (Rom. 8:20-23; Rev. 21:1-5). Paul was addressing the “saints . . . at Colosse” (Col. 1:2) and noted they were “alienated and enemies” (v. 21) before the Gospel came to them (vv. 5-7). Now, they were to produce fruit (v. 10) and live as those called out of darkness to the kingdom of God (“saints”). Thus, it includes humanity, but Scripture is clear that

only those who accept the provision of Christ are redeemed (Rom. 3:25). Those who reject Him will not be saved (Hos. 4:6). *Universalism* is a deceptive, demonic, false doctrine.

Calling All Believers

Paul often referenced “the church.” The Greek term used was a secular word (*ekklesia*) that referred to the gathering of a town’s citizens. The town crier would pass through the streets, calling the citizens together. Each one from the youngest to the oldest was allowed to participate. The Holy Spirit still calls Kingdom citizens to gather together to conduct the business of the King, and we all should be active participants.

B. The Reconciler (Colossians 1:22-23)

²² In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: ²³ If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister.

Reconciliation has been accomplished through the incarnate Christ. “In the body of his flesh” (v. 22a) dispels the notion that He only “appeared” to come in the flesh, as some asserted. Jesus Christ came in flesh (1 Tim. 3:16; Luke 24:39) and gave up His life freely (see John 15:13).

“To present” conveys Christ has made us to be the attributes that follow (Col. 1:22b). This is accomplished through His shed blood and death on the cross; therefore, we can be presented as transformed to the Judge of Heaven and earth. Paul lifted up three specific aspects of salvation. First, we have been made “holy.” God is holy and expects the same of us (Lev. 19:2; 1 Peter 1:16). We initially take on this characteristic of God through the work of Christ. It is not static state or a once-and-done quality, but carries with it the expectation to be continually sanctified, become more like Christ (Rom. 6:4), and made complete in Him (1 John 3:2). Inherent in *holy* is the fact that the Holy Spirit lives within us (John 14:17; Eph. 1:13); therefore, we are His sanctuary and should live as such (Heb. 9:24). Second, we must remain “unblameable,” or without blemish. This term was used

in the Septuagint (Old Testament in Greek) to refer to a sacrifice, the best the worshiper could present and acceptable to God (Ex. 29:1-2; Mal. 1:7-8). Third, Christ wants to present us as “unreproveable,” or beyond reproach. This is especially required of those in leadership (1 Tim. 3:10; Titus 1:6). These characteristics are to be lived out in the full view of the Father, who sees all, including our conduct and our motivations (Heb. 4:13).

The above characteristics underscore our participation (Col. 1:23). We are to remain continually “in the faith,” or the totality of what we have been taught (“heard”) about Christ and our relationship with Him. Paul then utilized two construction terms that describe a proper foundation upon which to build. We are to be “grounded,” or firm and unwavering. This is a common directive from Paul, who did not want followers of Christ to be swayed from their faith by external forces or internal struggles (1 Tim. 5:15; 6:20; 2 Tim. 4:10). He also instructs us to be “settled.” This primarily means *steadfast*, especially in our belief system, which motivates our actions and attitudes (1 Cor. 15:58). Doing so will keep us from shifting away (“moved”) from a Word-centered foundation (“gospel”). These truths we must proclaim in word and action to those God places in our paths, just as Paul did.

§ *How can we stay “grounded and settled” (v. 23) in the faith?*

3. CHRIST, OUR HOPE OF GLORY

A. The Revealer (Colossians 1:24-27)

²⁴ Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church: ²⁵ Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; ²⁶ Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: ²⁷ To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Paul returned to his situation (v. 24). It was not a plea for pity, but a visible example of faithfully living a life of joy (“rejoice”) in spite of his circumstances. The “sufferings” could refer to physical or emotional afflictions. They were endured “for you”—the Colossian believers.

The next phrase is difficult to understand. Three possible interpretations have been offered. First, Christ’s “afflictions” were insufficient, so Paul had to “fill up” the imperfections (“that which is behind”) of Christ’s sufferings. The word translated *afflictions* is never used of Christ’s atoning work. Also, this interpretation is completely contrary to the Scriptural doctrine concerning the completeness of Christ’s work. Second, the nature of the mystical union of Paul with Christ resulted in both of them suffering because of Paul’s afflictions. While Christ understands our difficulties and suffers when we do (Heb. 4:15), this explanation seems inadequate. Third, Paul understood his calling and mission brought oppression, trouble, and tribulation (Col. 1:24; 2 Cor. 11:23-30). He was imprisoned at this point. Therefore, he understood that as Christ suffered, he too would suffer “the afflictions of Christ in my flesh” for the sake of the body of Christ (Col. 1:24; see 2 Cor. 12:5, 9-10), as foretold by Christ (Acts 9:16).

Paul had a twofold ministry: (1) he was a “minister” (one who renders service and care) to the church (Col. 1:23-24); (2) he was a servant to make known the entire “word of God” (v. 25). It was not a position he chose, but one to which he was called on the basis of God’s eternal plan (“according to the dispensation of God”).

His proclamation included making known to all the “mystery,” or veiled doctrine previously known only to a few (v. 26). Augustine said the Old Testament is the New Testament concealed; the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed. As we look back at the Old Testament, the plan of God is evident; this was not true for all the saints prior to Christ, who initiated this unveiling (Luke 24:25-27). Paul was sent to the Gentiles to proclaim: “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27).

§ *What good can be accomplished through a Christian's suffering?*

B. The Strength-Giver (Colossians 1:28-29)

²⁸ Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: ²⁹ Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

Paul's mission was threefold (v. 28): (1) to proclaim boldly the good news of Christ and His salvation (1 Cor. 2:1-2); (2) to make plain the consequences of ignoring God's provision ("warning"; 2 Thess. 3:14); (3) to disciple ("teaching") the "wisdom" of God (Col. 1:28; 2:7). The goal was to "present every" person to whom he ministered as complete, or "perfect in [and through] Christ." This is why he labored, empowered ("working") by Christ and the Holy Spirit (v. 29).

The Unchanging Message

The Gospel does not change. People change because of the Gospel.—Charles Colson

SUFFICIENT IN CHRIST

The church at Colossae was one Paul apparently never visited. In this chapter, he has laid out his love and concern for them, as well as explained the nature and motivation of his apostolic ministry. It is filled with his theological teaching that leads us to completeness in Christ. Too often we focus on our insufficiency. Paul tells us what we need has already been supplied through Christ so we might live victoriously. The decision is clearly ours and one we must reaffirm every day. Anything less is a blemished sacrifice and a failed witness to those around us, especially those who are on this journey with us.

Daily Devotions

- M. Christ's Birth and Reign Foretold (Isaiah 9:2-7)
- T. Christ the Light (Isaiah 49:1-7)
- W. Christ the Suffering Savior (Isaiah 53:1-12)

- T. Christ Reveals the Father (John 1:14-18)
- F. Christ Above All (Hebrews 1:1-12)
- S. Christ the Worthy Lamb (Revelation 5:6-14)