

The Exalted Christ

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Well, today I want to focus our attention in this session on the Person of Christ. And it might seem like a given that we would talk about Christ, but I fear that all too often we lean more toward the practice of loving the idea of Jesus more than loving Jesus Himself. I think sometimes it's easy for us to treat Him as though He were an add-on, and not the focal point of our faith. I'm not saying this to be insulting to anybody, but as flawed, sinful, distracted people, it's very easy in the busyness of life - and I'm sure you know what I'm talking about - to take our eyes off of Jesus and to fix our eyes on whatever else is in front of us whether it's a person, a thing, a goal, whatever it may be. We sort of sprinkle some Jesus on our cereal in the morning and then go on with our day versus making Him, like I said, the focal point. 1 John 5:12 however says, "He who has the Son, has life. He who does not have the Son of God does not have life." So our life is directly connected to the Person of Jesus Christ. As John Cotton, the great Puritan, said, "Jesus Christ is the fountain of life." And so I think we would do well this morning to gaze at the Lord Jesus Christ and spend our time looking at Him so we might know Him better and love Him more and glorify Him. And so there are very few passages of Scripture that I'd rather be in in terms of their value, in terms of their high and rich Christology than Colossians 1. So if you have your Bible with you, turn to Colossians 1. We're going to look specifically at v. 15-20.

So Colossians 1:15-20. And I've titled this message "The Exalted Christ." Now, Colossians was written by the Apostle Paul as he was sitting in prison. And a pastor came to him - a pastor by the name of Epaphras who was the pastor in Colossae. He traveled about 1300 miles to get to Paul to convey to him a message that there's problems brewing in his church; or I should even say in the churches. In short, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is being attacked. The Person of Christ is being attacked. And biblical Christianity for them hangs in the balance. And this other brand of pseudo- Christianity is being pushed. Now from what we can gather from the text, this is a blended religion that's coming into Colossae, a sort of a syncretistic religion. And what we can tell from our text in chapter 2 if you were to look at chapter 2, this religion - this false religion - consists of elements of Greek philosophy, Jewish legalism, Gnostic mysticism, and self-debasing asceticism. And they've all kind of been wound together into this one religion. And the idea of this brand of religion - and any false religion really - is that you can somehow add to or modify the tenets of the faith, and therefore, improve it. You hear about this today. Well, this is a new kind of Christianity. We want to be more relevant in our approach. We want to do things in a new way. We want to take things to the next level. And we're trying to add to and modify and enhance Christianity in the hopes that it will make it more palpable. It will be better somehow. We know that anything that adds to or subtracts from or modifies the Person and work of Jesus Christ is altogether false. False. Paul calls this "another gospel" in Galatians 1:8 and is thereby worthy of condemnation. So this is not just ancillary doctrine that we can kind of hash over. This is core tenets of the faith. So all throughout Colossians 2, if you were to read Colossians 2, Paul skillfully dismantles each tenet of this

Colossian heresy. He goes right down the list and talks about how this is false and Christ is preeminent. This is untrue; Christ is true. This is bad; Christ is all supreme.

But before he does that - before he goes to refute the false doctrine, he must expound on what is true. Now leading up to this passage, he tells the church that he's been praying for them. After all, they're a genuine church. These are genuine believers. They've come to know Christ. They love Christ. These are the bride for whom He gave His life. So he tells them in Colossians 1:9, he says, "And so from the day we've heard of it, we've not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding." This is to the church, he says, "that you may 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; that you be strengthened with all power according to His glorious might for the endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to be inheritors of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and He's transferred us into the Kingdom of His beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." So Paul here is really rehearsing the testimony - the general testimony of faith. That's your testimony. That's my testimony. Those believers who have been qualified by God as inheritors, who have been delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred into the Kingdom of His beloved Son, and he says, "in whom we have been redeemed and have forgiveness of sins." That's us.

But who is the object of our faith? Who is the Captain of our salvation? Who is worthy of all of our praise and adoration? This is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ and that's who Paul wants to talk about next. He goes right from the prayer, redemption, forgiveness of sins, and he says this: "He" referring to Jesus - look at v. 15, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 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. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. And He is the Head of the body, the church. And He is the beginning, the first born from the dead, that in everything, He might be preeminent. For in Him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross."

Now, I'm just going to admit to you right now, it is very hard to do justice to a glorious passage like this in one sermon. We went through this a few years ago at my church. I do this in four sermons. I'm not apologizing for the brevity of today, but just to let you know that we're only going to scratch the surface of all that's here because this passage really is magnificent.

Christ Is Exalted as Deity

But I want to draw your attention for our purposes today to four key truths; four main realities in this passage pertaining to the exaltation of Christ. So number one, we're going to see Christ is exalted as deity. Christ is exalted as deity. Look at v. 15. Paul declares that Jesus "is the image of the invisible God." The image of the invisible God. The Bible affirms that God is Spirit and therefore invisible. In fact, Jesus says the same thing in John 4:24. But more than God being invisible - because He is invisible, He's unable to be seen that way - there's more than just He's invisible because He's Spirit. He's unable to be seen, I think foremost because He's holy. He's holy. For example, in Exodus 33, Moses - remember this - asked God, he said,

"Lord, show me Your glory." I want to see You, God. That's an earnest prayer, isn't it? That's what we want. I want to see You. He wanted to see God because He wanted to be close to God in fellowship. I want to see the One I adore. But what is God's response in v. 20 of that chapter? He says, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live." Nobody can see Me, Moses. I'm sorry. Sinful humanity cannot withstand God's awesome holiness or His perfections. We can't stand it. We couldn't tolerate it. To see Him face-to-face because of our iniquity is surely to die. Even when the glory of God is enthroned above the cherubim, above the Ark of the Covenant in the temple, in the holiest of holy places, even then, God was making a statement that it's clear to all the people that He is separate and distant and holy. They had to veil - there were veils. There were walls. The priest had to go in and he was behind another veil. God could not be seen face-to-face. But all of that would change. All of it changes.

The Old Testament includes references to the coming of the Lord in a way unlike anything anybody could have imagined. In Ezekiel's vision - this is just an example - Ezekiel's vision from the heavenly throne. He sees the throne room and he looks up and he sees somebody in the throne room of God, Ezekiel says with human appearance sitting on the throne. Now if you're a first century Jew or even a 7th or 8th century B.C. Jew, you're going to see that and hear that vision, and you're going to say, well, wait a second. That's just not right. A human sitting on the throne of the Most High God?

In Daniel's vision in Daniel 7, he sees (and I'm going to quote this), "Coming with the clouds of heaven, one like a Son of Man..." A human. "...A son of man, and He came to the Ancient of Days who was presented before Him and to Him (to this Son of Man) was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him," and it says, "His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away." Visions in Heaven of a human being exalted. Visions of a man being given the Kingdom of God. If no man can see God because of sin and no man can apprehend Him because of His holiness, why do we see visions of a human man in Heaven?

Turn to John 1. John 1. I love this stuff. Oh my goodness. The Apostle John begins his Gospel with a magnificent prologue. And I would entreat you to go home and read this again tonight. But he starts with a prologue and he establishes the bounds of Jesus' eternity - the fact that He's eternal - His omnipotence, His preeminence, and His deity. I want to read this with you here. John 1. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light that all might believe through Him. He was not the light, but he came to bear witness about the light. The true light which gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him; but to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And we have seen His glory - glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness about Him and he cried out, 'This was He of whom I said He who comes after me ranks

before me because He was before me. For in His fullness, we have all received grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God..." We just saw this a few minutes ago, right? "No one has ever seen God. The only God who is at the Father's side, He has made Him known."

So, again, another passage I can't exposit and it's killing me, but just trust me, it's magnificent, and go home and do it for yourself. But here, John who calls Jesus the Word, and he places Him at the beginning, or in the beginning with God. So He's with God first of all. But not only is the Word with God, he says the Word was God. This is a declaration of deity. Deity. Not only is He with God the Father, the Most High, He says He was God Himself. Throughout church history, Christians have understood and affirmed that Jesus the Word is the second Person of the Trinity. That's who He is. He's co-equal with the Father and with the Spirit. He's eternal, existing before time. He's powerful in creation. He sustains all life. In fact, this explains both Ezekiel's and Daniel's visions of seeing this Man, this Christ we know to be in Heaven with the Father. That's who they're looking at, by the way. They see Christ sitting on the throne of God, coming and given dominion and authority and a Kingdom and a rule forever. That's Jesus. But then in v. 14, I'm still in John here, John makes the astounding statement. Flabbergasting statement. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." This word for "dwell" literally means "to pitch His tent." He tabernacled with us. He - God - lived here with us. To a first century Jew, that's preposterous! That God, the Holy One, the One whom I can't see, the One I can't even speak His name; I can't even say His name - that One; the One who appeared to us in fire and smoke, the One who delivered us from Egypt through the Red Sea, the One who defeated our enemies, the One who incinerates people with His glory, the One who strikes down our fathers because they rebelled against Him - that God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - He came and became flesh and dwelt with us? Yes! And His name is Jesus of Nazareth. So amazing!

Go back to Colossians. Go back to Colossians. Once again, the subject of v. 15 is Jesus, the beloved Son of God. And once again, just to read it again, he says, "He is the image of the invisible God." The word translated "image" here is "icon" in the Greek. It means a representation. It's the way a statue represents a living figure. We don't look at a statue and say, well, that's the person. But we say, that's the person in terms of that's their representation; that's accurate representation. In the same way, Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God. He is the manifested image of God. Not "a" manifestation - that's heresy, but "the" - the manifestation of God. In every conceivable way, He is like Him. Not that Jesus looked like anything special, mind you. Isaiah 53:2, "He had no form or majesty that we should look at Him; no beauty that we should desire Him." In other words, He looked just like a regular man when He was here. There was no halo over His head. There was no train of gold behind Him. He walked and talked like a man. Yet, Hebrews 1:3 says, "He is the radiance of the glory of God; the exact representation of His nature." God has never shined brighter on earth, never made Himself more clear and glorious than at the arrival of Jesus Christ. Never! In Colossians 1:19 Paul even adds to this, "In Him (Christ)..." "In Him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell." As a Man, He didn't appear, at least outwardly, to be all that glorious. He was just a man. He's fully man. He's truly man as the creed would say. But as God, Jesus embodied all the fullness of the glory of the Most High God. He is both truly God and fully God and truly man, fully man. Two natures in one. How does that work? I have no idea. That's a great mystery of the faith. But we know it's

true. However, He is truly God, therefore wherever He went, wherever He moved, whenever He acted, whatever He spoke, whenever He exercised His power, He's acting exactly like the Father would have acted lock-step with Him and in tune with His divine prerogatives. So much so that in John 10:30, Jesus declares, "I and the Father are one." Later in John 14, the disciples ask Jesus, "Lord (just like Moses did) - Lord, show us the Father and it will be enough for us." Just like Moses, we want to see the glory of God. Show us the glory of the Father, please! They wanted to see the glory cloud. They wanted the Mt. Sinai experience. They wanted divine fireworks, but what does Jesus say? What does Jesus say? "Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father." How? Because as Paul says He is the image of the invisible God. And as Hebrews would say: the exact representation of His nature. God in all of His fullness dwells in the Son. That's why John says, "For from His fullness we have received grace upon grace." Everything we need, everything we hope to find, everything our heart desires, my friends, is in Christ Jesus. You don't need to chase something else or someone else. Don't make another person - your spouse, your kids, your friends, whoever, celebrity culture - don't make someone else the object of your affection. Love Christ supremely because He's God. And He's worthy and He's exalted, the Bible says, as God, as deity. Glorious truth here.

Christ Is Exalted Over All Creation

Number two, number two, Christ is exalted over all creation. Over all creation. In addition to being the image of the invisible God, Paul adds in v. 15 if you look at it, that Christ is the firstborn of all creation. Now, this phrase has caused a lot of controversy. After all, we understand that Christ is eternal and uncreated. He was never not existing. He never will not be existent. He is eternal. So how then do we understand this truth that He is firstborn? How is He firstborn? The Greek word that's used here is *prototokos* which is a word that can mean firstborn in terms of chronology - so if you have three kids and one's the oldest, that's the first born. Okay, but it can also be used in context to speak of preeminence. Preeminence. So for example, if I were to say to you my wife is the first woman in my life. Now, technically speaking, chronologically that's not true. My mother was the first woman in my life chronologically. But when I speak to you in terms of preeminence, I would say my wife is the first woman in my life signifying rank and importance and preeminence. She is first over everyone else, including myself. So this sense, the same sense of the importance and rank and preeminence is the same sense in Colossians 1:15. This concept is readily seen throughout the Bible. I'll just give you one example. When Esau was born, Esau was chronologically the firstborn. He came first. But Jacob, his younger brother, receives the blessing of the firstborn. Jacob is treated like he was the firstborn even though he's chronologically not. That's the position, the preeminence that we're talking about. In Psalm 89, the psalmist rightly applies this concept to the coming Messiah. He notes of the King, "He shall cry to Me, 'You are My Father, My God, the Rock of My salvation.'" To which the Lord responds, "I will make Him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth." Again, preeminence. Exaltation. Supremacy. And so, for Paul to declare Christ to be the firstborn of all creation, he's placing Jesus in the highest possible position above everything. Not even just people - above everything. Everything that was made, Jesus is above. He's exalted. He's lifted up.

And not only in rank and supremacy, look at v. 16. Look at v. 16 again. He says, "For by Him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, dominions, or rulers or authorities, all things were created through Him and for Him." Now we begin to see how the exalted Christ interacts with the creation. We note a few things. First of all, Christ is the originator. He is the originator. Creation comes, the Bible says, by Him. At the end of v. 16, it says, "through Him," "for Him," it's held together in Him. So all of this is a connection directly to Jesus Christ Himself. John 1:3 says Christ was in the beginning with God, all things were made through Him, and without Him - this is important - without Him was not made anything that was made. So all creation is directly tied to and connected to and finds its source in Christ. All things, Paul says, but then he qualifies - I love when Paul does this. Paul makes a point and then goes on a tangent for like a paragraph. That's Paul's style. I love it. He says all things in Heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. This statement highlights the totality. It doesn't matter what we're talking about, whether we're talking about the heavens - even the angels, the archangels; whether we're talking about earth, whether we're talking about the visible reality, the invisible reality - it doesn't matter. There's no spirit realm that surpasses Christ.

Then he notes, "Whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities." This is interesting. Many scholars believe this to be a reference to the distinct classes of angelic beings. That could be true. I'm not exactly sure. But if that is true, that means that Christ is over all angelic beings: demons, Satan, archangels, all things. Sometimes I think we get this modern idea in our brains that God and Satan are kind of warring against each other. That's not true at all. Satan's down there and God is crushing him under His heel. That's the relationship between God and Satan. So we don't have to go and wrestle between God and Satan and sort of hope it all works out in the end. No, he says in Romans 15, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." So Christ is supreme over all of that. He's the Creator. He's the originator.

Secondly, it says here that Christ is the agent of creation, the agent of creation. What does that mean? All things, Paul says, were created through Him. Through Him. 1 Corinthians 8:6 says that there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. So the totality of creation was made by Christ through His hands. So there's not a single atom in the whole world, not a single molecule that hasn't been touched and held by Christ. Not a single one. Because He is the Creator. All things came through Him. All things - I want you to listen to this - all things owe their existence to Jesus. All people if they have breath in their lungs, they owe that breath to Jesus Christ. They don't even know it. But the air, whatever the air is made of, the molecules - that substance belongs to Christ. You're borrowing His material when you breathe. The lungs that were put in your body, in your chest, those lungs were created by Christ. They belong to Christ. The heart that beats blood in your chest, that belongs to Christ. The thoughts you're thinking, the thoughts that maybe an atheist would hate: "God, I hate Him" - you even have a brain because God gave it to you. I don't want to belabor this point too much, but this is important. He owns all things and everything came through Him.

Next, Christ is not only the agent, He's the goal. He's the goal. Not only before all things were created through Him, he says all things were for Him. For Him. Everything that was made was made to glorify Him. All things. That's why Psalm 50 declares, "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord."

Next, He is the forerunner of all creation. Verse 17 says, "He is before all things." Before all things. Here, Paul seems to be summarizing what's happening in verses 15 and 16. But this really foreshadows the statement in v. 18 that Christ is preeminent. Again, not chronology, but rank. He is supreme, exalted, sovereign.

Lastly in this section, Christ is the Sustainer. The Sustainer. Look at the end of v. 17. "In Him, all things hold together." Hold together. John 1:4 says that life is in Him. In Him. We know that it's not just spiritual, but biological. All of life is held together in Him. Even today, physicists who study the building blocks of nature can't understand, can't figure out the substance that holds atoms and molecules and particles together. They don't know. They have a funny name for it, but they don't know what it is. But the Bible says that Christ is what holds all things together by His power and by His might. If Christ were to relax His grasp for just one millisecond, all creation would dissipate. It would fall apart. Your atoms and your molecules would just fall apart. He holds everything together. It's in Him. And so in all ways, Christ is exalted above all creation.

Christ Is Exalted Over the Church

Number three, Christ is exalted over the church. Verse 18, "And He is the head of the body, the church." Now we know from places like 1 Corinthians 12 that the whole assembly of redeemed saints is called the body of Christ. That is the church. Every single Christian believer is part of Christ's body. There is nobody who's left out. If you're a Christian, it doesn't matter where you live or what you're doing or where you've come from or even what church you're sitting in, what building you're sitting in, if you have been redeemed by Christ and He is your Lord and Savior, if your sins have been forgiven and you've been born again in Christ Jesus, if your faith is in Christ, then you are a member of His body. And specifically, Ephesians 1:22-23 says that His body is the church. It is His body.

But what is His relationship to His body, the church? Paul notes that Christ is the Head. Kephale in the Greek. In the context, the term "head" refers to Christ's position of authority. But there is a little bit of nuance here. As the Head, Christ is the originator of the church. We see this in Matthew 16:18 when Christ declares that He will build His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Furthermore, He's also our Head, our Leader, our Chief, our Sovereign. So not only did our assembly, our body - in terms of our collectedness as believers - not only did we come from Christ, but He also has authority and ruler-kingship over this assembly. He is the governing Head. He has the right to tell us what to do. Not everybody likes that. In fact, I'd say few of us really like that. Now we say we like that. "Oh yes, Lord, I want to do Your will." But I'll tell you when He pushes on you, you say, "Well, I don't want to do that." But Christ is the Head of the body, the church. He mediates through the authority of the Scriptures, by the power and direction of the Spirit, through and carried out by qualified elders. But Christ is supreme. Make no mistake about it. What He says goes. Period.

And even more than authority, Christ also supplies life and vitality for the body. And Colossians 2:19 notes the reality that the entire body is supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments growing with the growth that is from God. So all of our life and vitality, unity, gifts of the Spirit, all of that is held together in Christ. He supplies it for you. We're knit together as one in Him. We are members of one another. But we are together, because we are specifically

connected to Christ. So we all function as hands and feet and eyes and ears, serving and giving and loving one another. But all of our life in the body is subjected to the Head. He is the Head of the body, the church.

And then Paul continues, "He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent." Now, it might seem in this verse that this is repetitious. It might seem like, well, Paul, you're kind of running out of things to say. You're just repeating yourself now. That's not true. It might seem repetitious, but Paul is using this language to illustrate the grounds of Christ's Headship. The grounds of it. As the beginning (arche in the Greek), Christ is not just chronologically first. He's also the spiritual source of the church.

What do I mean by this? Paul uses the phrase "firstborn from the dead" referring to Christ's resurrection. But more specifically, we need to read - I'll just read these verses to you. In 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, "In fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep, for as by a man came death, but a man has come also the resurrection from the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all should be made alive, but each to his own order, Christ the firstfruits, then at the coming, those who belong to Christ." What is that saying? Not only does Christ own and rule the church, He is the Head and serves as the prototype, the pattern for all believers who would be born again from the dead. So Christ dies on the cross, goes into the ground and resurrects and ascends to the Father. That is also spiritually what's happening with each one of us. We are united with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection. Our new life comes by the Spirit, but it's in Christ. That's why He tells Nicodemus in John 3, "Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." To become part of Christ's body, the church, you have to die spiritually in Christ and then be raised again to new life in Christ. And so Jesus must be the firstborn from the dead blazing a trail from death to life for us to follow. Putting death to death as John Owen would say. Rising triumphantly that He might be preeminent. And so, therefore, Jesus leads us as our Head. And we follow Him out of darkness of death to new life in the presence of the Father. And that's how as Paul says earlier in Colossians 1:13, "God has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the Kingdom of His beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." And so Christ accomplishes this by redeeming His bride. He redeems and buys her back. And then carries her with Him to Heaven. Beloved, don't miss this. He is the Champion. He is the soul winner. He is exalted.

Christ Is Exalted Through the Cross

Number four, lastly, Christ is exalted through the cross. Christ is exalted through the cross. In verses 19 and 20, Paul writes this, "For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things whether on earth or in Heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross." Now we know that according to Romans 8:22, that the creation groans together in the pains of childbirth. And I'll tell you, if you're living in the world, and I know you are just like I am, we feel that, don't we? Ever since the fall when sin entered into the world through Adam, all creation was cursed. Not just people, by the way, even the ground that Adam walked on received a curse. All things including fallen humanity, all of it has been hobbling along and crying out for restoration. Groaning as the Bible says. Now, to be clear, only humans can be saved from their sins and enter a relationship with God. But there is

coming a day when the Lord returns and remakes the creation - the new heavens and the new earth - and when that happens, He will free the created order as Romans 8:21 says "from the bondage of corruption." He's going to deliver all of it completely. In the same way, Romans says, we ourselves - brings it back to us - we ourselves having the firstfruits of the Spirit, we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for the adoption, the redemption of our bodies. So just like the creation is groaning, in the same way, we groan too. There are days I wake up and I am smacked with a sense of my own sinfulness. And I'm sure you can relate. And you just think to yourself: Lord, redeem my body. I know my soul is redeemed, but Lord, just come back. Maranatha. I can't wait to be rid of this sinful mind and these sinful actions and my sinful thoughts and deeds. I want to be redeemed completely. Glorified with You. But we have to wait until His return. But here in Colossians 1:20, Paul notes there is coming a day when Christ will reconcile all things to Himself. Everything will be made right in and through Jesus Christ. He says whether on earth or in heaven. Now that day is coming, and the Bible says it's as good as done.

But reconciliation must first take place with the ones who caused the fall, namely us, humanity. And the Bible is clear that our sinful rebellion against God started a war. Romans 5:10 says that we are enemies of God. Enemies of God. And God's righteous response to the assault on His throne is condemnation and wrath. And it's a real condemnation and it's a real wrath. And humanity is at war with God, and I have some bad news. We're on the losing side of that war. Our only hope is that peace is possible. A cease-fire. A change of relationship through reconciliation. And let me tell you, the good news is that Christ is the One who can do it and does do it. He comes to earth. He lives perfectly. Pleasing to God in every way. Completely righteous. He's sinless. He's flawless. And He gives up that perfect life by dying on the cross. And on that cross, He sheds His blood as a sacrificial payment for sin. This is God's biblically prescribed method is the shedding of blood. Hebrews 9:22, under the law, almost everything is purified with blood, "and without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins." Pause right there. There's no such thing as an unbloody sacrifice. I don't care what the Roman Catholic Church says. The only sacrifice for sins is a blood sacrifice, and the only blood sacrifice that is worthy and efficacious is the blood of the perfect, spotless Lamb of God. And He came only once. The problem for the Old Covenant believers - and this is the problem that Hebrews says, it's impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. What is the solution? Christ offers Himself as a single sacrifice. Even when you sin today - and you will - when you sin and confess, you don't have to go and get Him to go again and die for you. His sacrifice, His death, covers all of your sins. You confess, you bring them to Him and say, Lord, forgive me. Have mercy. 1 John 1:9 says that God is faithful and just. He will forgive. He will forgive. A single sacrifice pays for the sins of His church. He takes away the penalty for sins. He stops the war. He satisfies the wrath of God. He reconciles believers to Himself. And Paul says: all by the blood of His cross. So important. In all of this - in all of this, He is exalted. He is glorified. And so, when we come and we talk about Christianity, we talk about living the Christian life, we talk about our relationship to politics and government and marriage and family and all these things, even holiness, we must first look on Him with humble hearts. We must know the object of our faith and our love. And we look on Him with full repentance and earnest prayer. We look on Him with faith. We trust Him. We believe Him. And the Bible says He justifies the saints by faith. And

in His death and subsequent resurrection, the Bible says God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in Heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Prayer

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we come to You. Lord, we have only taken a brief, cursory look at Colossians 1:15. And we've only just skimmed over seeing Your glory in that passage. But Father, I pray that You would work in us as I know You've already been working in us in this conference. That You would move in us and stir in us new affections for Christ. That we wouldn't just say: that thing happened a long time ago to me. But rather that we would wrestle and acknowledge and grapple with the truth that Christ is preeminent and He's present now. That our love and our adoration and our worship would increase, and our communion with Christ would intensify. And Spirit of God, I entreat You as well that You would do a work to revive the hearts of men. And for those who don't know the Lord, I pray that You would move in them and convict them of their sin and they would repent and believe in Christ, they'd be born again. But for those of us that are in Christ, that we would not grow stale and silent and dull and boring and cold, but that our love would grow. We'd magnify the Christ and see Him as preeminent. And the cares and the things that we're so worried about in this life would just flutter away. And we would place our hope and our life and our dreams and our goals and our marriage and our family and our very future squarely on the shoulders of Jesus, and say You are my salvation. You are my pardon. You are the fountain of my life! Because in You is all life. God, that our hearts would grow and burst at the seems in adoration of our exalted Christ. Thank You, God, that You have worked through the Scriptures, that You empower and embolden by Your Spirit, that all life and all adoration and all praise and worship is to the praise of Your glorious grace. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.