**Supreme and Sufficient**

Colossians 1:15-17

**Introduction**

Imagine you come to your Sunday school teacher to talk about a problem you are having with your job (you do not feel adequate to meet the demands; your boss seems to have too high of expectations). After you have explained your situation, he asks you to open your Bible to Colossians 1. For the next 15-30 minutes, he gives you a detailed account of Christology including His redemption, the incarnation, and His sovereignty. He talks to you about the gospel. Or, let’s say you go to a biblical counselor to talk about a problem you have with a certain vice (gambling, lying, smoking, anger, substance abuse, sexual sin) or for help with having a meaningful marriage relationship. The counselor explains redemption, the incarnation, and God’s sovereignty. In both of these situations, you listen, but wonder what a study in Christology has to do with your situation. Although it may seem more like a topic for the theological classroom, it actually addresses your situation in life. This is how Paul begins his letter to the new believers in Colossae.

John Stott writes, “Introductions are now over. The customary thanksgivings and prayers are done. As we have seen they were not mere formalities, for they are filled with evidences of Paul’s acute understanding of the situation in Colossae. However, it is time now to come to the main purpose of the letter. We might expect the apostle to begin with an appeal to the Colossian church to avoid the approaching dangers, which should be as obvious to them as they are to him. This, for instance, was his method when writing first to the Corinthians…But in this case he does no such thing. It seems almost as if the new teachers and their attractive spiritual wares are forgotten. Instead Paul launches out into a great description of Christ….The reason for this approach must be that Paul well knows that the Colossians are not willfully unfaithful. It is simply that they are young in the faith, with their convictions as yet unformed and immature. Because of this, the speciousness (hollowness, falsity) of the visitors’ arguments has not been detected. It had not occurred to the Colossians that to welcome this new teaching was to be disloyal to the old. It seemed to them an exciting fresh revelation of truth taking them on from Epaphras’ beginnings. Paul sees in this dangerous innocence a failure to understand what belief in Christ, and loyalty to that belief, involves. It is therefore his wisdom to set before the church, right at the start of the letter, an exposition of the supremacy of Christ.”

1. **Paul began his letter to the Colossians with a description of the supremacy of Christ.** 
   1. Those who write commentaries agree that this passage is probably the most important and concentrated doctrine of the characteristics of Christ and His deity.
   2. This is also made clear in the structure of this part of Paul’s letter.
2. Notice the shift to third person singular, as well as the numerous references to “all” and “every” (8 times in v. 15-20).
3. “Someone who writes in this way wants his or her readers to stop and think…” (Wright)
   1. We, like the Colossians, should stop and think about the supremacy of Christ.
4. Paul wants them to understand who Jesus is: God manifest in the flesh; the image, or perfect expression, of God (John 1:1, 14-18, I Timothy 3:16).
5. As God in the flesh, Jesus is superior to His creation, not a part of it. Firstborn does not have to apply to birth order; it means existing before and superior to all else.
6. Since He is the Creator, He is of the highest rank. He is the Creator of all the universe, material and immaterial. He is the Creator of all the ranks of angelic beings and they are subject to His rule.
7. As the Creator, He is also the Sustainer. “Consist” means to put together; to have existence; to continue; to bring together or hold together. We owe our very existence to Him and He alone can hold life together. He is alive forevermore.
8. **Paul begins with the supremacy of Christ to demonstrate the sufficiency of Christ.**
   1. The Colossians may have innocently bought into what the false teachers were teaching.
9. False teachers will always minimize the person of Christ. “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. In their philosophy, Jesus Christ was but one of many ‘emanations’ that proceeded from God and through which men could reach God.” (Wiersbe)
10. The false teachers emphasized externals of religion over practical Christian living.
11. They emphasized angelic intermediaries. (2:18). Paul said they should not buy into the infatuation with spiritual powers, being neither intrigued by how they might benefit them nor frightened by them for how they might harm them.
12. “If they grasp even the outline of this picture… the Colossians, who had gratefully turned away from their pagan ‘gods’ in becoming Christians, will not be inclined to go back to them…Nor will they be tempted to look to Judaism…” (Wright)
13. If they denied His sufficiency, they would inadvertently deny His supremacy.
    1. They should be struck with the sufficiency in Christ.
14. Because He is supreme, He is able to forgive the sin of their past, to hold them together in the present, and to bring them to glory in the future.
15. That is how Paul’s letter was intended to help them.
16. How does his emphasis on the supremacy of Christ affect us today?
17. **Central Idea: Since Jesus is supreme, He is sufficient.**
    1. We can become infatuated with people and things other than Christ.
18. Sports stars of today will be replaced by stars of tomorrow.
19. Powerful leaders may lose their power.
20. Technology is made obsolete by new technology.
21. Relationships built on things other than Christ do not hold together.
22. Riches can rust, go out of style or be stolen.
    1. We should emphasize the supremacy of Christ.
23. We should not exalt people or things—not even spiritual people or things (churches, preachers).
24. We need to exalt the supremacy of Christ to our children, friends, family, and coworkers.
    1. He is sufficient for your salvation.
25. He is sufficient to save you from your past, in your present, and in the future.
26. You do not have to fear serving Jesus exclusively in a pluralistic society.
27. Those coming out of polytheistic religions need not fear false gods.
28. Those who have come out of a Catholic background do not have to work through the saints and Mary.
29. Those who have been saved from a religion of works can rest in God’s grace.
    1. He should be Lord over every part of your life.
30. We live in a society where the secular is separated from the spiritual.
31. He is sovereign over both. They are not to be so sharply separated.
32. The person serving as a pastor is not serving God more than a person working at home or in the factory.
33. Every area of discipleship is related to the supremacy of Christ: finances, missions, marriage, Bible study, etc.
    1. We should view every life situation with hope.
34. He who created you has redeemed you.
35. He who created you can change you.
36. He who created you can sustain you.
37. “How strange if He who is sufficient to sustain a universe, should be insufficient in power for the little church at Colossae!” (Stott)
38. You do not hold everything together, whether it is financial issues, health issues, relationships, or personal struggles.
    1. Having Christ, you already have all you need. (Illustration: The story goes that the late newspaper publishing magnate William Randolph Hearst, who collected expensive artwork, read about some very valuable works of art. He purposed to find them and own them. He dispatched an agent to the project and the man traveled abroad in an attempt to find the art. After months of searching passed, the agent returned to inform Hearst that he had found the artwork…in Hearst’s own warehouse! He already owned that for which he was searching the world over.)

**Conclusion**

Since Christ is supreme, you can count on Him to be sufficient.