**Perfectly Preeminent**

Colossians 1:18-19

**Introduction**

Life can often be an intense struggle for first place. Whether it’s in politics, the workplace, sporting events, or even church life, people struggle to have the preeminence—to be first; to have the highest rank. Your personal life can also be a place of intense struggle for who or what will have preeminence. Who or what is going to get your time and attention? Who or what is going to make your life complete? Who or what is going to determine the direction of your life? Paul began his letter highlighting the supremacy of Christ. If the Colossians were convinced of His supremacy, they would be satisfied with His sufficiency. However, Christ desires not just to be prominent in your life, but preeminent. Not only is He your Redeemer and Creator, He is the Head of the church, the beginning and firstborn from the dead. Why should Jesus have first place?

1. **The Colossians should give Jesus first place in their lives because He is before all others.** 
   1. Jesus is the Head of the body, the church. (V18a)
2. He is the Ruler over the creation (V15-17).
3. Here He is presented as the Ruler over the new creation. (2 Corinthians 5:17)
4. “Head” means one who is of supreme or preeminent status, in view of the authority to order or command. (I Corinthians 11:3, Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; 5:23, Colossians 2:10,19)
5. The church is the “called out assembly.” The members of the body function together to accomplish that which the church has been called to do. However, there has to be a leader in the church. Since Christ is the Head of the body (the church), He should be the leader of all we do; we all work under His authority and He supplies what we need.
   1. Jesus is the beginning. (V18b)
6. “Beginning” indicates first in time, position, and rank; the founder.
7. If He is the founder, He should be first.
   1. Jesus is the firstborn among the dead. (V18c)
8. He was the first to be resurrected from the dead.
9. He is the first of a new order of resurrection.
   1. You should give Jesus first place in your life because He is before all others: your spouse, friends, spiritual leaders, your boss, the president, and yourself.
10. **Central Idea: The Colossians should give Jesus first place in their lives because He alone is sufficient for everything they will need in life. (v. 19)**
    1. It pleased the Father that all the fullness took up residence in the Son; He thought it good. (v. 19; 2:9).
    2. There was an influence on the Colossians externally and internally to find completeness in something other than Christ.
       1. A focus on rules to complete their Christian life.
       2. There was an emphasis on angelic beings to complete their Christian life.
       3. There was an emphasis on knowledge.
       4. There was an emphasis on religious experiences or encounters.
    3. It makes most sense to conclude that Christ would complete the Christian life.
       1. God’s fullness dwells in Christ.
       2. “Dwell” – take up residence; inhabit.
       3. The Son is then the all-sufficient source for life.
       4. The completeness needed in their lives is found in Christ alone.

**III. We can have substitutes for Christ in our own lives.**

* 1. Have you ever tried to replace an essential ingredient with a lesser substitute?
     1. The substitutes are just not like the real thing – sugar, salt, egg.
     2. Instant never matches the real – potatoes, stew, oatmeal, coffee.
     3. It is best to use what the recipe calls for; the real thing.
  2. There are substitutes for Christ in our lives that seem like plausible, even biblical substitutes. We can even try to substitute Christ with parts of the Christian life. (The following is a summary from *Helping People Change* by Timothy Lane & Paul Tripp)
     1. Church participation: Jim is involved in everything. He is faithful in giving and serving, but he has not allowed God to rule every area of his personal life. Serving is good and has its place. However, if a person is participating in ministry and does not have a hunger for God or evidence of change in his or her daily live, their church participation may only make them feel better about themselves. It is a poor substitute for understanding our identity and sufficiency in Christ. He has substituted Christ with Christian service.
     2. Living by a set of rules for everything: Sally has expectations for everyone, including herself. As long as she is performing the things on her list, she feels she has acceptance with Christ. She has replaced communion with Christ with a mountain of Christian rules.
     3. Living for religious highs: Christene has moved from church to church and meeting to meeting looking for her next dynamic, spiritual encounter with God. Her life is like a roller coaster—exciting while she is on, dull between rides. She has to learn that you can’t reduce Christianity to its emotions and experiences. Christianity is in a person. She has substituted Christ for Christian experiences.
     4. Fighting for social morality: Shirley can’t understand why others aren’t taking a stand with her. Her Christianity is more of a defense of that which is right, than a joyful pursuit of a relationship with Christ. She has replaced Christ with morality and activism.
     5. Theology: John is a theological and exegetical expert. He has read volumes of Christian books. Yet, there are parts of his life that do not match up with Christianity. He is proud and critical. He has spent time mastering the Word, but has not allowed the Word to master him. He has replaced Christ with Christian truth and principles.
     6. Therapy: Jen is constantly in pursuit of healing. She is focused on reading material that helps her to meet her unmet needs. She shares books with others. She views herself in need of healing more than in need of redemption. Demanding and self-absorbed, she is more in pursuit of therapy than godliness. She has substituted the Savior for a therapist..
     7. Fellowship: George is glad for all the new people he has met at church. He is constantly looking forward to the next activity or time to go out to eat with his friends. His trouble started when a friend moved and another married out of the single class. He began to miss Sunday school and church because he didn’t seem to get as much out of them. He has replaced Christ with Christian fellowship and networking.

C. These are attractive because they emphasize an important aspect of the gospel. The danger is found when we reduce the gospel to any one of these areas.

* + - 1. Illustration: The ingredients of a cake—flour, sugar, salt, baking soda, oil, eggs— are not appealing in and of themselves. But together, they complete the cake.
      2. When you accept Jesus, you receive all you need for the Christian life, not just part of it.
  1. Why would someone settle for just one or two aspects of the Christian life?
     1. Because that aspect appeals to our self-righteousness.
     2. Because that aspect appeals to our selfishness.
     3. Because that aspect appeals to our desire to make something or someone else the root of our problems (blaming our environment). “We tend to believe that the sin that surrounds us is more dangerous than the sin that resides inside us.” (Tripp)
     4. Because that aspect appeals to our independence. We can fix it. We want to be the center of our world.
  2. In reality, we must acknowledge who we are and who He is.

1. This will bring you to one conclusion: You need His grace.
2. “To the degree that you forget that you are a sinner…you will underestimate your daily need for Christ and the relationships in His body that are His tools of change.” (Tripp)
3. We have to understand the extent of our sin, the centrality of the heart, the benefits of Christ, and the fact that He calls us to growth and change.
4. Since life change is His agenda, repentance and faith must be a way of life.

**Conclusion**

There is no substitute for Christ. We should rejoice in *Him* and rely on *His* grace! Therefore, He should be preeminent and first in your life. Since He is the Leader, He should be the Leader of your life; don’t follow anyone who isn’t following Christ. Since He is God, He is sufficient for your life; don’t try any substitutes.