



# Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church

## Five Solas

### The Supremacy of Christ

#### Colossians 1:1-23

11/18/2018

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## Main Point

We are called to an “all or nothing” obedience to Christ’s supremacy, allowing Him to rule all areas of life.

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## Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What religious beliefs are most influential in our community? Why are these ideas so popular?**

**Why do you think people choose to believe these specific things about Jesus, but not the entirety of who He is?**

As followers of Jesus, we believe that knowing Him and accepting salvation through Him is the only way to enter into a relationship with God. But this belief is scandalous to many who see it

as narrow-minded. What weight does the supremacy of Jesus hold in a world where tolerance and pluralism reign? The apostle Paul, during his missionary career, understood he was introducing the grace and hope of Jesus to people impacted by a wide variety of influences and trying to sort out their beliefs. In Colossians 1, Paul argued that Jesus is the sole source of redemption, and He alone is worthy of worship and obedience.

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## Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ COLOSSIANS 1:1-8.**

**What did Paul cite as evidence that the Colossians had responded positively to the gospel?**

**How did the gospel radically change the Colossians? How does it radically change every Christian?**

Paul thanked God for the believers because he had heard about their faith in Christ and their love for all the saints. Epaphras evidently had given this report to Paul (see 1:7-8). Paul specifically acknowledged their faith, hope, and love, evidences of the gospel's transforming power in their lives.

**How are faith, hope, and love related? Why must hope exist before the other two?**

**How, according to this passage, does the gospel continually grow and renew the Christian? How have you seen that dynamic of growth and renewal happening recently in your life?**

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ COLOSSIANS 1:9-14.**

Paul informed the Colossian Christians that he constantly prayed for them. He reminded them that through Christ, God had rescued them from paganism and had brought them into His beloved Son's kingdom. Through Christ, God had freed them from slavery to sin by forgiving their sins (see Col. 1:9-14). Paul understood that Jesus is the center of everything, and he wanted the church in Colossae to understand that too. His prayer in verses 9-12 is a beautiful wish list for the Colossian believers.

**What does it mean to “walk [or live] worthy of the Lord” (v. 10)?**

**Colossians 1:11-12 is considered Paul's second prayer for the church in Colossae. What do these verses teach us concerning the power of the gospel at work in our lives?**

**How have you experienced the promises Paul described in Colossians 1:10-12?**

**Why do you think Paul chose the word “rescued” (v. 13) to describe the way Jesus redeemed His followers?**

**With respect to your own story of redemption, what has changed since you embraced Jesus as Savior?**

**HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ COLOSSIANS 1:15-20.**

**Looking at Colossians 1:15-20, what phrases clarify Jesus' true identity?**

**How do these verses speak to Jesus' centrality in and supremacy over creation?**

**What does the church look like when Jesus is the head? What does it look like when He is not?**

**How does it make you feel to know that God loves you enough that He sent His Son as a sacrifice for you (vv. 19-20)?**

Paul noted that Jesus reconciled everything to Himself through His death on the cross (v. 20). Because of Christ, everyone has the opportunity to repent of their sins and enter into a relationship with God. In order to effectively reconcile all of creation back to God, Jesus had to have the authority to do so. Because He is the fullness of God, Jesus has that authority. Christ's death and resurrection created the most pivotal moment in the history of God's creation.

**HAVE A FINAL VOLUNTEER READ COLOSSIANS 1:21-23.**

**Why was it important for Paul to remind the Colossian believers of their past lives? How does reflecting on who you were before Christ impact your relationship with Him today?**

**What does it look like for you to remain grounded and steadfast in your faith?**

Our lives should be grounded on the supreme foundation of Jesus, and our faith should be fixed on Him too. Jesus offers salvation, which is certain, and we have no reason to be swayed from the hope of the gospel.

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## **Application**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**How do the truths about Jesus from Colossians 1 impact the way you love and live personally, in community and in our world?**

**What does it mean for you to say Jesus is supreme in your life? What patterns or attitudes need to change for you to experience the full benefits of His supremacy?**

**Colossians 1:21 reminds us that we all have great stories. What's your story of redemption? Consider writing it down and sharing it with someone this week.**

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## **Pray**

Pray that God would help you see that your salvation through Jesus should impact everything around you, most importantly how you live and relate to others.

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## **Commentary**

### **COLOSSIANS 1:1-23**

1:1-3. Paul greeted his letter's recipients and included Timothy, his coworker, in the greeting. Paul identified himself as Christ's apostle to indicate his authority (Col. 1: 1). He addressed the believers as saints (set apart ones) and faithful brothers in God's family of grace (1:2). He prayed that God would give them His grace (unmerited favor) and peace (wholeness). Paul informed the Colossian Christians that every time he prayed for them, he did so with thanksgiving to God. By identifying God as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul stressed Christ's sovereignty and Deity, thus establishing early the truth that Christ was in no way subordinate to anyone or anything.

1:4. Paul thanked God for the believers because he had heard about their faith in Christ and their love for all the saints. Epaphras evidently had given this report to Paul (see 1:7-8). The word "faith" conveyed the sense of trust in and commitment to Christ. "Love" translates the distinctive Christian term for persistent, self-giving good will (agape) that acts for others' best interests. The word "saints" is a synonym for "Christians." These believers' commitment to Christ was issuing in active love for all other Christians.

1:5. The Christians' love for one another sprang from the hope reserved for them in heaven. "Hope" has the idea of living with confident assurance, not wishful thinking. The noun has the sense of the fulfillment of believers' salvation when they enter God's immediate presence in heaven. The Colossian believers had learned of this hope when the message of truth was proclaimed to them. Because of the message's absolute and unchanging nature, they were to hold to it and not become victims of false teachings.

1:6. Paul defined "the message of truth" (1:5) as the gospel that had been preached in Colossae. It was the good news of Christ's servant ministry; His voluntary, atoning death on the cross; and His victorious resurrection. This good news of grace was bearing fruit wherever in the world that it was being proclaimed. God's purpose was that the revelation of His grace in Christ be offered to all people, even as it had been presented to the Colossians.

1:7. Epaphras had taken the good news of Christ to Colossae. Likely, he was the founder and pastor of the church. He may have proclaimed the gospel in Colossae during Paul's lengthy ministry in Ephesus (see Acts 19:1-20:1). Paul referred to Epaphras as much loved. Epaphras also was Paul's fellow slave; that is, both were totally subservient to their Master, dedicated to obeying His will. The phrase on your behalf can have two possible emphases. Paul could have meant that Epaphras faithfully ministered to him in the Colossian believers' stead. A second possibility is that Paul was referring to Epaphras's serving the Colossians by preaching the gospel to them. The Greek word translated "minister" is the term from which we get the word deacon, meaning "servant."

1:8-9. Epaphras had told Paul about the Colossian believers' love in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit working in and among them was producing God's kind of love (agape). From the time of Epaphras's report concerning the Colossian believers' positive qualities, Paul consistently interceded on their behalf. Paul asked God to fill the believers with the knowledge of His will. "Knowledge" renders the Greek term for "full knowledge" that comes from a personal relationship with God. Paul stressed that God revealed His will in Christ. The Colossian Christians had partial knowledge of that will; they needed complete knowledge. "Wisdom" is

the grasp of general principles; “understanding” (insight) is the application of those principles to specific situations—making wise decisions. The term “spiritual” stresses that genuine wisdom and understanding come through the Holy Spirit.

1:10. The purpose of wisdom from God is that believers may walk worthy of the Lord—that is, may live in such a manner that their lifestyles honor Christ and reflect His character. In attitude, word, and deed, believers were to follow Christ’s will for them. With four words conveying continuous action, Paul described what Christlike living involves. First, it is continuously bearing fruit in every good work. Here, fruit refers to gracious deeds of kindness and generosity prompted by God’s working in believers’ lives. Second, believers are to be growing in the knowledge (full knowledge) of God. They are to experience a deepening personal intimacy with God in which they understand and implement more of His character.

1:11-12. Third, Paul prayed that the Colossian Christians would be strengthened (empowered) by all power. The Greek term rendered “power” has the sense of God’s inherent, unlimited strength or ability available to believers. The phrase “glorious might” has the sense of God’s sovereign strength. Such God-given strength would enable believers to have endurance and patience—to persevere in the face of difficulties without grumbling or retaliating. Fourth, Paul prayed that the Colossian believers would go on giving thanks to God. The word “Father” may emphasize God as Christ’s Father or as believers’ Heavenly Father.

1:13-14. God deserved gratitude because He had rescued the believers from the dominion of darkness. In Christ, God had freed believers from enslavement to sin. In doing so, He transferred them into the kingdom of His Son. By identifying the kingdom as Christ’s, Paul stressed the Lord’s absolute sovereignty. Another reason for consistently expressing thanks to God was His providing redemption in Christ. Christ’s voluntary self-giving on the cross provided release from sin’s slavery to all who would place their faith in Him. His vicarious atonement made possible redemption, which Paul explained as the forgiveness of sins.

1:15. Paul employed a hymn to emphasize Christ’s sovereignty. Heretical teachers in Colossae contended Christ was merely one of many powers between people and God. In 1:15-17, Paul refuted their teaching by presenting Christ as Lord of the universe. Paul asserted that Christ is the image of the invisible God. The Greek term rendered “image” conveys the idea of a perfect representation. Because God is Spirit (see John 4:24), the human eye cannot see Him. He has made Himself known perfectly in Christ. The phrase “the firstborn over all creation” does not indicate that Christ was the first created being. In the Old Testament, the firstborn son occupied a position of honor, privilege, and supremacy; he was first in priority. Here, the term expresses Christ’s preexistent Deity.

1:16-17. Christ is Lord over creation, for by Him everything was created. Christ is vastly superior to all created powers. For Him literally is “unto Him.” Creation moves toward Him and His purpose for it. The phrase “before all things” emphasizes Christ’s preexistence. He was the Agent of creation, and He also maintains it in the sense of giving it stability. Christ sustains creation and gives it harmony.

1:18. In 1:18-20, Paul stressed Christ’s lordship over the church, His body—His people who actively extend His ministry in the world. The preexistent Lord over the universe is also the church’s head—the Source of the body’s life, who governs it and gives it unity. The word “beginning” stresses Christ’s priority in time and power. In addition, He is the Originator of life in God’s kingdom—new life made possible by grace. The phrase “firstborn from the dead” refers to Christ’s resurrection as the revelation of the new quality of life He gives: resurrection life that extends beyond death. Christ’s victory over death proved that He has first place in everything.

1:19-20. The term “fullness” could mean “full measure” of Deity, meaning that Christ is fully God. God’s purpose is that through Christ He may reconcile everything to Himself. Everything includes humans and the universe (see Rom. 8:19-23). The word “reconcile” has the sense of restoring a relationship, of creating unity. Christ alone (through His sacrificial death) was God’s chosen way of bringing about reconciliation. God made peace possible through Christ’s blood—His death on the cross. The phrase “things on earth or things in heaven” refers to the whole universe, material and spiritual.

1:21-22. The Colossian believers’ salvation demonstrated God’s purpose “to reconcile everything to Himself” (1:20). Once, their evil actions—wicked lifestyles—showed they were alienated from God. Their former works issued from the sphere of evil in which they lived. Outside God’s rule of grace, they had been hostile to Him in mind. The phrase “but now” stresses the sharp contrast between the believers’ former condition and their current relationship with God. In Christ’s voluntary suffering and death for others, God made salvation available to all who would place their faith in Christ. God’s purpose in offering reconciliation through Christ’s death was to make believers holy, faultless, and blameless before God.

1:23. Paul stressed believers’ responsibility to remain faithful as people reconciled to God through Jesus’ death. Paul fully expected the Colossian Christians to remain in the faith—that is, their commitment to Christ. They were not to move away from the gospel they had heard to embrace the false teachings being presented to them. Paul emphasized the genuineness of the gospel the Colossian believers had heard and accepted. It was the same good news being proclaimed across the Roman Empire. It was the good news the risen Christ had commissioned Paul to preach as His servant.

