

Is Christ Preeminent in Your Life?

Paul's Letter to the Colossians: The Preeminence of Christ

Book of Colossians:

Chapters 1 & 2: The Preeminence of Christ

Chapters 3 & 4 The Believer's Service to Jesus Christ

Christ is Preeminent in Creation Col 1:15-18

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

16 For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

Christ is Preeminent in Redemption Col 1:19-23

19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,

20 and through Him to reconcile all things to

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Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

21 (a statement on why the need of redemption) **And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, *engaged* in evil deeds,**

22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, (spiritual death) in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—

23 if indeed you (1) continue in the faith (2) firmly established and (3) steadfast, and (4) not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

So the if clause or the conditional clause in verse 23 is not about being reconciled to God forever but with being presented before Him holy and blameless at the Judgement Seat of Christ right after the Rapture.

Preeminence of Christ in the Church Col 1:24-2:3

24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

25 Of *this church* I was made a minister

according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God,

26 *that is*, the mystery which has been hidden from the *past* ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints,

27 to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

28 We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present (at the Judgment Seat of Christ) every man complete in Christ.

29 For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me. (God the Holy Spirit)

2:1 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face,

2 that their hearts may be encouraged, (but notice before this encouragement 2 things must precede) (1) **having been knit together** (2) **united in love**, (Spiritual Love) and **attaining to all the**

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wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, *resulting* in a true knowledge of God's mystery, *that is, Christ Himself*, (when you have this knowledge of Jesus Christ you are Rich in Christ).

3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (The more you know Jesus Christ the richer you are and the wiser you are in Christ.)

Warnings: Satan is violently opposed to you having this wealth and wisdom and encouragement in Christ, therefore Paul gives stern warning to every believer in Jesus Christ.

Warnings in Christ Col 2:4-23

Warning against persuasive arguments Col 2:4

4 I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. Fine sounding arguments; well crafted argument; with false arguments that merely sound good.

Now in verses 5-7 Paul states how we can guard ourselves against these false arguments.

5 For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ.

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6 Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

Here is the leading of the Holy Spirit, by faith in the Holy Spirit we are filled with the Holy Spirit and armed against the schemes of Satan.

7 having been firmly rooted (in knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ) *and now being built up in Him and established in your faith,* (How? By increasing in the Knowledge of God (1:10) and by the wisdom and knowledge found only in Christ (2:3)) **just as you were instructed, (purpose of the local church) *and overflowing with ... gratitude.***

Warning against empty, worldly philosophy Col 2:8

8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

Gods solution to the philosophy of man Col 2:9-12

9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,
10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;
(He is the head and authority of your life)

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11 and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;

12 having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

We must see our need of all Christ did for us Col 2:13-14

13 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, (when we were born physically we were imputed Adam's Original Sin and therefore dead spiritually) **He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,** (all personal sins)

14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; (The Mosaic Law) and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

Christ victorious over the Angelic Conflict Col 2:15-19

15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them,

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having triumphed over them through Him.
(Through Jesus Christ)

Warnings against losing Rewards at the Judgement Seat of Christ Col 2:16-19

16 Therefore since all that Christ has done for you and all you are in Christ no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a **Sabbath day-(remember: a little legalism will not hurt you, it will kill you)**

17 things which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

(and the substance of your life belongs to Christ.)

18 Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize (rewards at the Judgement Seat of Christ) by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on *visions* he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,

19 and not holding fast to the head, (Jesus Christ) from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

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Christ is Freedom from Legalism 20-23

20 If— (since) you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as,

21 “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!”

22 (which all refer to things destined to perish with use) — in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men?

23 These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, *but are* of no value against fleshly indulgence

Chapters 3-4 address the conclusion that when we consider all Jesus Christ has done for us and to us, it is our privilege to serve Him

1 Therefore if (since) you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. (Live your life in light of eternity not time)

2 Set your mind (the place of battle) on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Don't look or expect recognition in this world)

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4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

Put off the old man Col 3:5-9

5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

6 For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience,

7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them

8 But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth.

9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices,

Put on the New Man Col 3:10

10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—

How do we put on the New Man? In the power of the Holy Spirit increasing in Knowledge of God and Growing in the Knowledge of Jesus Christ (Col. 1:10 & 2 Peter 3:18)

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11 (Christ is the only solution to all racial problems) **a renewal in which there is no *distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.***

12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

14 Beyond all these things ***put on love***, which is the perfect bond of unity. (This refers to Spiritual Love which comes only by the power of the Holy Spirit)

We now move back to where we left off to study receiving rewards or losing rewards at the Judgement Seat of Christ. And now after that study maybe you will be more interested in this warning verse.

2:18 Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on *visions* he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,

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Before we move on let's address one important and personal question.
To whom is this command given?

Immediate context: this is directed to the believers in Colossae but by application it is addressed to believers throughout the Church Age wherever they may be. No believer should ever allow a religious person to disqualify them of rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize

You might recall that we noted a number of ways this is translated:

King James: Let no one beguile/deceive you of your reward.

NIV: Do not let anyone disqualify you.

English Standard Version: Let no one disqualify you

International Standard Version: let no one cheat you out of the prize

New Heart English Bible: Let no one rob you of your prize

God's Word Translation: Let no one tell you that you don't deserve a prize

Douay-Rheims Bible: Let no man seduce you

Wuest: Let no one as a judge declare you unworthy of a reward

Note the number of ways of interpreting Colossians 2:18:

not defraud you;

not deceive you;

not disqualify you,

no one cheat you,

no one rob you,

no one tell you that you don't deserve a prize,

no one seduce you,

no one act as your judge and

no one declare you unworthy.

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Each of these are attempts to translate the PRESENT IMPERATIVE of the rather complex compound verb *katabrabeuo* where the prefix *kata* carries the idea of against and the root word means to be a judge or umpire, and it was used in the giving of awards or the prize in a public game. Or to judge against someone in a game therefore to defraud or deprive of the prize.

This word always carries the negative impact of making judgment against, to condemn, to defraud or to deprive.

(The Complete Word Study Dictionary of New Testament and Vol. 3 of the Complete Biblical Library)

The ideal of defrauding or deceiving or cheating comes from the prefix *kata*—against. The main point to grasp from this word is that we are not to allow anyone to act as our judge so as to cheat us out of the prize. The PRESENT tense means be on guard all the time, everyday in your life, especially after you fail, because this is when you will hear it the loudest!

The challenge is in the IMPERATIVE MOOD, which we have seen is furthers removed from reality. Believers can be talked out of seeking this prize by listening to people.

This is up to each one of us! Not to allow anyone to disqualify us from the prize, from the reward.

One more point before we move on: In verse 16 no one is to judge you (Introduces the attacks of legalism.) Then we had in verse 4 no one delude you (Then in verse 8) no one takes you captive (And now) let no one keep defrauding you of your prize. Who is this ‘no one’? Ultimately this is Satan and his servants. This includes *false teachers, legalists, ritualists*, any and all religious people. Remember religion is what man does for God while Christianity is what God does for mankind.

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The believer who cares about his life in Christ and his prize in Eternity, must be on constant guard as to whom he/she listens to, or even of themselves becoming weary of living the Spirit Filled Life and growing in the Word of God. This is the warning of -

Heb. 10: 35 Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. (At the Judgement Seat of Christ)

36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. (At Judgment Seat of Christ)

37 FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, (Jesus Christ) AND WILL NOT DELAY. (Rapture)

38 BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM. (no loss of salvation but of rewards)

39 But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction,

The Greek verb is used intransitively (an action verb with no direct object) and transitively (action verb with a direct object). According to The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the N.T., “when the verb used here in verse 39 is used transitively, as here, it means losing or loss. But, when used intransitively it means perdition or ruin,” so here this means loss of Rewards at the Judgement Seat of Christ. **but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul** (throughout their lives).

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2:18 Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize

We now have three attacks and all are from religion, not from sins.

First Attack has to do with false humility and asceticism.

Second Attack has to do with false worship and demonism.

Third Attack has to do with visions and dreams.

These are all related to Religion and are most operative today.

First Attack: by delighting in self-abasement

“*Oh, we are not concerned with receiving rewards.*” They sound so pious. Don’t fall for this line from religion, just remember, it is your Savior–friend Jesus Christ who will be giving these rewards, and if they are important to Him, they should certainly be important to us. **by delighting** taking pleasure in **self-abasement or self effacement**

Religious people are always impressed by what they give up—especially if it has some ancient tradition related to it, like fasting. Giving up these things impresses them and others so it certainly must impress God. What impresses God is when we *give up* the desires of the flesh nature. There is nothing more impressive to these people than putting yourself down.

There is bona fide humility which comes from the Holy Spirit and not boasting in self but in Jesus Christ. Not boasting in what you do, what you give up but boasting in all that Jesus Christ has done for you and to you.

There is a second part of this false humility. It is catering to asceticism of our Inherited Sin Nature. They develop a whole system of asceticism and they call it spirituality. They give up certain things and God is

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suppose to be impressed. Oh, another clue; they look at the things they formerly did and they call it worldliness. Actually, they have never been more worldly than they are in asceticism because Satan is the ruler of this world and one of the Devil's ace trumps against Jesus Christ is the attack of religion and one of the attacks of religion is asceticism.

We now move to the -

Second Attack which has to do with false worship and demonism

and the worship of the angels,

We could spend a great deal of time on both 'worship' and on 'angels.' But here, worship refers to external forms of acts of worship. Remember these people delight in making a public display of their false humility.

As to the angels, this most likely refers to elect angels. It is most interesting how so many people are more occupied with angels than even with Jesus Christ. Perhaps in their false humility they do not think they are worthy for Christ so they go through angels. Many actually worship angels as in '*touched by an angel.*' This is unacceptable worship. True worship should be directed toward Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

And to worship angels is idolatry.

This brings us to the Third attack by religion.

Third Attack has to do with visions and dreams

taking his stand on *visions* he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,

People who do not want to sit and study the Word of God place a great emphasis on visions and dreams. Instead of taking their stand on the

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Word of God; on the Knowledge given in His Word they take their stand on what they have seen in visions or dreams. They do not want to be confined by the Word of God, and so they love the freedom of just standing on their visions or dreams or under some ecstasies or hallucinations and then build doctrines on their hallucinations. This is what happened to Mohammad when he went into the cave of Hira and hallucinated. His hallucinations were written in the Koran. Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormons had a series of hallucinations and all this resulted in the idolatrous Mormon movement. People are impressed with their dreams, their visions, their hallucinations and often give them spiritual significance, denying the final authority of the Word of God. Their visions, their seizures, their hallucinations are more important than the Word of God.

People listen only to the Word of God! Make the Word of God the final authority in your life. Satan attacks Jesus Christ. Satan attacks the Bible and he attacks the authority of the Bible. He teaches that what you dream, or see in a trance when you get ecstatic is just as real or more important than what the Bible says and supercedes anything in the Bible. Therefore strive for dreams, ecstasies, emotional trances, hallucinations etc.

inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,

What is important here is the verb is in the passive voice which means this person receives being inflated by his own mind of the flesh. Inflated means to be inflated with pride, puffed up or arrogant. These people receive being arrogant by one or more of these attacks of religion. Always remember religion is Satan's ace trump against Jesus Christ and against the Word of God **from the thinking of his fleshly mind**

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Please remember the battle is in the mind: **set your mind on things above (3:2)**

2:18 Let no one deprive you of reward (at the Judgement Seat of Christ) **their taking pleasure in self effacement and in worship of angels, take a stand on those things which they have seen** (dreams, visions, trances, hallucinations) **receiving being inflated with arrogance under the influence of the thinking of their carnal minds.**

People, a few may be called upon to be martyrs for Christ! who give up their lives for Christ.

I pray that most of you will live your lives for Christ.

This demands perseverance in the study and growth of the Word of God, throughout your entire life, young, middle aged or even old age

increasing in the knowledge of God (1:10)
growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord (2 Pet. 3:18)

And finding your joy in telling others of the saving power of Jesus Christ and how He can become their friend as you have found Him to be your Savior-friend.

I pray that when you die or are raptured, when you come face to face with Jesus Christ, you will be seeing the face of a close friend!