

Colossians 1:18

“So that in everything he might have the supremacy.”

By a mysterious combination of accident of birth and my own freewill

- I am, for better and for worse (normally for worse), a Plymouth Argyle fan
- My father first took me to a game when I was about three years old
- I neither remember the opposition nor the score, he took me many times thereafter
- And since I was about the age of 12, when living in Devon, I have been to every home game
- rain or shine, summer afternoon and winter's evening, I was there for a record high attendance
- the F.A. Cup Fourth Round tie against Everton on 25 January 1975 with 38,000 in the crowd
- I was there on a freezing day in February 1978 (interestingly only three years later)
- For a record low attendance of just over 2,000 when the game was eventually abandoned
- And I was excited to be able to attend a dinner at the club in about 2002
- To hear the vision for the future that was being expounded by the new manager

Looking for an opportunity to offer some Christian witness, I said to the young man next to me

- ‘The one thing I am hoping is that we don't have regular Sunday football at Plymouth Argyle’
- ‘Why not?’ he asked, falling into my trap – ‘because I am a Christian and following Jesus
- Is even more important to me than following Plymouth Argyle!’ He replied,
- ‘I go to the big Baptist Church in town!’ Not my most successful Christian witness, then
- And although it is true that going to church does not make you a Christian
- Any more than standing in a garage makes you a car, it is true that one of the important things
- That Christian people do, is to meet with other Christians
- In worship, in prayer, in Holy Communion and, most importantly, around God's Word

While undoubtedly many things in New Testament times were different from today

- It is surprising how many challenges faced by NT Christians are the same as we are facing
- Colosse, in the Roman province of Asia (part of modern Turkey), was a market town
- Situated on the River Lycus and probably the least important town to which Paul wrote
- Colosse was on an important trade route meaning that many people would pass through
- philosophical speculation, ‘syncretism’ (a muddle of all kinds of religious ideas)
- Jewish legalism (based on around old religious observances), angel-worship, spiritism
- Were all challenges to the Christian Church - but as with all false teaching
- the area under most significant attack was the person and nature of the Lord Jesus Christ
- rather than attack the false teaching – the Apostle Paul set out the truth about Jesus

Curtis Vaughan, an eminent American Baptist minister and New Testament professor

- summarised it powerfully in this way – Jesus is the object of our faith (1:4), God’s Son (1:14)
- the Redeemer (1:14), the image of God (1:15), the Lord of Creation (1:15)
- the head of the church (1:18), the reconciler of all things (1:20), and that’s just chapter one!

“He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.”

(Colossians 1: 17-18)

Here is not just one religious leader among many – but ‘firstborn from among the dead’

- the founder of a new people, a resurrection people – he is firstborn and he should come first
- it’s a play on words, ‘firstborn’ and ‘first place’ the old Bible rendered this ‘the pre-eminence’
- he is first over creation, in the church, in the resurrection but what place does he hold in your life?

I SAVIOUR

The essence of being a Christian is to acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Saviour

- to do this it is necessary to admit our need of Saviour – we believe all need to be saved
- we need a saviour from personal sin which results in death and the corporate sin of the world
- the madness is that while people seem to realise the world needs saving – it cannot go on like this
- they do not seem to be able to see that salvation starts with the individual – all can be saved
- religion, good works, politics can never be our saviour – why doesn't God do something?
- He has, by coming in person – God the Saviour and his name is Jesus
- The Christian life is a life in which by the power of the Spirit of God, Christ is received
- Yet for many people this is where it ends, Christ is received but Christ is restricted

When you received Jesus as Lord and Saviour how did you receive him? Imagine it this way

- We like having visitors to our house but we receive them in different ways
- Day visitors are made welcome in the lounge and maybe the kitchen but not the bedrooms
- Weekend visitors have their own bedrooms as well – but I have access to all of it, it's mine
- When we receive Jesus as Saviour, in what capacity did we receive him?
- Are there rooms in our life that are not under his Lordship?
- In the Parable of the Rich Young Ruler – wealth was not negotiable
- In the Parable of the Great Banquet – all kinds of things were made excuses
- 'I've just bought a field' (the excuse of property); 'I've just bought five yoke of oxen' (work)
- 'I've just got married' (family); perhaps we should add, 'I'm going to the Cup Tie' or
- I am watching something on the TV (or anything that is the god of the present age, entertainment)
- Is Jesus your Saviour, is your life in a life in which Jesus is received but his Lordship restricted?

II SIGNIFICANT

I am not going to suggest which group anyone is in; least of all me

- But I do know a number of people who probably fall into this group
- We know people who pray, and read their Bibles, they are regular at Sunday worship
- They belong to a fellowship or study group, they try to be faithful in witness and evangelism
- In terms, of the local church, along with the ministers, they are some of our key people
- Christ is significant in their lives, I might say 'our lives' and his will is considered
- If you feel that you are in this group my purpose is only to encourage you not discourage you
- It is important that Christ's will is considered but are you a person where his will is compromised?

It was a Maundy Thursday and I was walking to the village chapel with some of my members

- One of the members felt that God was calling her to some kind of Christian service
- But did not know what it was: I told her, 'when you give up your non-negotiables you will know'
- Her non-negotiable was that she had never lived more than seven miles from where she was born
- Almost as soon as she gave that up, God opened the door for her to move into full-time service

And what about you? Are there circumstances when Christ's will is considered but compromised?

- What's the excuse? Property? Work? Family? Entertainment? A friend or friends?
- Maybe it is as simple as one or more of the Ten Commandments
- Maybe you know what God's will is for you but some excuse is holding you back
- Or maybe it is because you have your raft of excuses that God never calls you on
- After all, why bother inviting someone to do something when you know the answer already
- There are lives in which Christ's will is considered and yet so often compromised

III SUPREME

I have never seen one on the road – perhaps it went by too fast – but among several contenders

- At 267.8 mph, the Bugatti Veyron Super Sport is reckoned to be the fastest car in the world
- But how does anyone know? The only answer is to put it on the test track

It's all very well and good to say that Christ is supreme in our lives when things are going well

- As someone ironically observed, 'Christians don't tell lies, they just sing them'
- It's not that we deliberately sing things that we don't believe
- It's just that it is often harder to be a Christian on Monday morning than a Sunday evening
- A life which bears witness to the supremacy of Christ will have endured Christ's testing
- We can learn a lot here from the testimony of the Apostle Paul who tells the Corinthians

“I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have constantly been on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have laboured and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.”

(2 Corinthians 11: 23-27)

Endurance in testing means not being found wanting when the going gets tough

- It means victory over the harshest or most subtle temptations
- It means standing faithfully for the truth of Christ, for the Lordship of Christ
- Against anything and everything that can be thrown at us

When the children were small we gave them various things to do – some were challenging or difficult

- But we did not deliberately give them things to do, just to see them fail
- Some of us might wonder why God does not give us great tasks to do, only the more humble ones
- Perhaps we need to start out on those, to prove ourselves under testing, before moving on
- God is calling us to achieve great things for him
- He does not necessarily expect us to do those things tomorrow
- but constantly to be prepared for the next mission that he has for us whatever that may be
- continually earning his confidence and trust
- so that in everything we prove that in our lives that Jesus Christ is the one holding the first place
- that he is Saviour but not only Saviour, that he is significant but not only significant
- but pre-eminent, supreme. But this is not something that we achieve (by working hard)
- but something we allow, by allowing the Lordship of Christ to change us
- as we let him reign supreme within our hearts

Not just Saviour: a life in which Christ is received but a life in which Christ is restricted

Not just Significant: a life in which Christ's will is considered but a life in which his will is compromised

But Supreme: a life which has endured Christ's testing and a life which has earned his trust