

Colossians 1:18 From Strength to Strength: The Foremost Place

This series of ten messages is collectively titled, “From Strength to Strength” based upon **Psalms 84:7**: “**They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion.**” This tenth message deals with Christ’s position in our lives.

The day is coming when the Lord Jesus Christ will have the supremacy, when He will be Lord and when “**at the name of Jesus every knee should bow**” (**Philippians 2:10**). But though the prophetic application of these words is important, there is an equally important personal application:

Colossians 1:18: “**And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.**”

- Grammatical Usage: “**preeminent**” or in the Greek, “**próteuó**” meaning, “**chief; first**”.
- Literal Interpretation: He is also the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.
- Contextual/Comparison: God keeps His Word, God continually uses His Word. False teaching has begun to infect the minds of some of the believers in Colossae, and Paul intends for the clarification and exaltation of the majesty of Jesus Christ to be the theological vaccine that protects the Colossian Christians from the disease of Christ-diminishing, Christ-distorting error. From **Colossians 2**, three glimpses of the false teaching in Colossae. Notice that in every case the failure to embrace a clear enough and big enough Christ is what makes the church vulnerable:
 1. **Colossians 2:8**: If you don’t embrace a Christ that is big enough and clear enough, you will be a sitting duck for Christ-diminishing, Christ-distorting philosophy, empty deceit and human tradition.
 2. **Colossians 2:16–17**: If you don’t embrace a Christ that is big enough and clear enough, you easily mistake shadows for reality.
 3. **Colossians 2:18–19**: If you don’t embrace a Christ that is big enough and clear enough, you will stop holding fast to Christ as the great, all-supplying Head of the body and take up strategies of self-improvement.

If you embrace a Christ who is big enough and clear enough — the way Paul shows him to be in **Colossians 1:15–20** — you will have a theological, spiritual, biblical vaccination against a hundred Christ-diminishing, Christ-distorting errors. This is why:

1. The Lord Jesus Christ alone has the right to occupy the foremost place in human experience.

There is only one person in the whole of God’s universe who has the absolute right to occupy the first place in your life and mine. The Devil seeks the supremacy in our

life, but it is not his right to have it. There are three reasons why the Lord Jesus Christ alone has the right of being first in our life:

- A. Because He made us. **Colossians 1:16** specifically states we were not only created “**by Him**” but also “**for Him**” (**Pr. 16:4; Is. 43:7**). He made us in order that He might be first in our hearts and lives.
- B. Because He has redeemed us. **Colossians 1:13-14** states we belong to Him by legal right, for He has purchased us with His own life’s blood (**1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Peter 1:18-19**).
- C. Because God has given Him the supremacy. **Colossians 1:18** is underscored by **Ephesians 1:20-22; Philippians 2:9-11; and John 5:23**.

2. But though it is His right to occupy the foremost place in human experience, He does not always do so.

He is not always free to exercise His right. For example: in our life very often self is first (**Luke 9:59-61**; notice the words “**first let me**”!; compare **3 John 9**). Sometimes another life is first (**Matthew 10:38**); sometimes personal ambition, pleasure or possessions come first (**Luke 18:23**).

3. The Lord Jesus may be PRESENT in our life, yet not PRE-EMINENT

If you are a Christian, He is truly present – but is He pre-eminent? It is true to say that He is present in our national, political, commercial and religious life, but He is not by any means pre-eminent.

4. The Lord Jesus may be PROMINENT, but not PRE-EMINENT

That is, He may hold a very large and important place in our life and yet not hold THE place in our life. Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart and show you whether He is truly pre-eminent – or only prominent (**Psalms 139:23-24**).

5. When the Lord Jesus does occupy the foremost place in a human life the following three things are true:

- A. There is supreme love for His Person. We love Him more than any other person or thing; more than His service, our loved ones, ourselves – “**...more than these**” (**John 21:15**).
- B. There is unquestioning obedience to His commands (**John 14:15; John 2:5; Acts 9:6**).
- C. There is complete submission to His will. When the Lord Jesus occupies the foremost place in my life, I shall be willing to serve Him in the sphere of His choice, should this be His will, and if necessary to die for Him. Indeed, my attitude will be, “**Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure**” (**Mt. 11:26**).

➤ Conclusion: Is Jesus present, prominent or pre-eminent in your life?