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# Centrality of Christ in the Home

## Colossians 1:9-2:7

*Russ Kennedy*

When something is central to our lives...

Sports...

Entertainment (music, video games, movies)...

Children (activities, concerns, focus)...

Our series this month

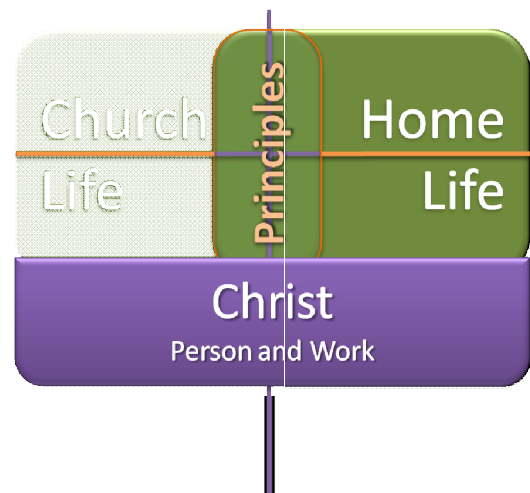
*Central Things for the Home*

Month long series in the morning and evening services...

Shared by the elders but I will be preaching the bulk of it...

Aimed at a radical approach to Christian living in the home...

An important principle as we think through parallel and perpendicular texts. Principles are transferable. The Scriptures see the spheres of life as overlapping with transferable principles and patterns. Because of the Bible's close connection between the home and the church, many principles overlap for both. As we work through our text this morning (as well as some of the other sermons) we will be observing principles in the text primarily about the church and then making application where appropriate to the home.



What does it mean for Christ to be central in our lives?

**The Preeminence of Christ Desired****(1:9-14)**

Paul's prayer puts the desire for the preeminence of Christ on prominent display.

<sup>9</sup> And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, <sup>10</sup> so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. <sup>11</sup> May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, <sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. <sup>13</sup> He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

What Paul asks for is particularly related to the dangers of the errors they were facing.

**The Details of His Petition****(v.9)**

The believers must know God's will, what He requires of us. This will is not the immediate flow of mundane choices, but is the larger moral issues.

So, believers must apply God's Word through spiritual wisdom and understanding. The application of what Paul is going to teach them in the coming paragraphs must be understood and applied with real insight and great wisdom.

**The Design of His Petition****(v.10a)**

Paul's prayer aims at establishing the measure of our walk, our lifestyle. Our whole lifestyle is to be conducted in such a way as to be worthy of the Lord. It will measure up to His character.

Paul's prayer also establishes the motivation for our walk, our lifestyle. We want to be pleasing to the Lord. Not just barely pleasing, but fully pleasing in every aspect.

Christ then is the measure and the motivation of our lifestyle, our way of living. This is most important in our homes. Christ centered living affects every sphere of life, including our homes.

**The Development of His Petition****(v.10b-12a)**

How it is fleshed out. These all are the results of enabling grace. There will all mark our lifestyles in our homes.

We will be practical in obedience as Christians bear fruit in good works.

We will make progress in knowledge as Christians grow in learning the Word.

We will be patient in endurance as Christians are strengthened to endure. Why endurance? What if God does not intend to solve all your problems?

We will be joyful in gratitude as Christians gladly give thanks.

Practical Christ-centeredness looks like obedience in good works, progress in know Christ, patient endurance and joyful gratitude.

## The Doctrine of His Petition

(v.12b-14)

In several important doctrinal phrases, Paul lays the foundation for Christ-centered living. It is both positive and negative. He states the truth for the instruction of our souls. And he corrects the wrong use of Christian vocabulary by the heresies entering the church. He does so as he is focused on Christ's work. Thus he fortifies us against errors.

He speaks of the reality of our sonship. We are qualified to share in our inheritance. This sonship is a family and a community truth. Our spiritual inheritance is something we have in our shared sonship with Christ and with our brothers and sisters.

He speaks of the realms of sovereignty. We have been rescued from the dominion, the realm, the rule of darkness. We have now been transferred into the Kingdom of His beloved son. Notice the interplay of kingdom and family.

He speaks of the redemption in our salvation. We have been forgiven of our sins. The charges against us have been applied to and punished in Christ. The demands of the Law have been satisfied.

## The Preeminence of Christ Described

1:15-23

Christ's preeminence is described over against those who see *anything* as being necessary besides Christ for salvation, transformation and glorification.

<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Christ cannot be preeminent where He is not known nor understood. For the sake of a walk that is worthy of Christ and pleasing to Him, we will need to grasp His preeminence:

### In Relation to the Creation

(v.15-17)

He opens with the *exaltation* of Christ in relation to the creation. As the center of your home, Jesus is to be worshipped.

He exalts the *PERSON OF CHRIST* (v.15). He does so in the *statement* of the truth.

Christ is the portrait of invisible. Just as the inner mysteries of the sun produce the outward light, so Christ is exact representation of God. He is the only and true *eikon*, the true likeness or replica. He is the outward illumination of the father's inner core and meaning. He is the Father's thought, spoken, the Father's glory, shining. To see Him is to see all that God is. This requires a profound awe and devotion lest we trample lightly where the glory is great.

Christ is the prototype of the visible. He is its *protokos* or prototype. This refers to his relation to all of that exists outside of God and excepting evil. He is previous to it. He is primary over it. He is the pattern of it. He is the pattern, model and environment of all that is created.

He exults in the *POWER OF CHRIST* (v.16-17). He does this through an *argument* for the truth.

Christ is the creator of all. He is the root, ground and source of all existence, nothing excluded.

Christ is the ante-dater of all. Since He created *all things*, then He must have existed before all things and therefore is not Himself created.

Christ is the sustainer of all. The word here not only means that it is held together but that it is upheld in its essential relations.

Does Christ being preeminent in creation mean anything for your home? Do you challenge the normal way of thinking about our world? Do you in your home assert without embarrassment that God through Christ created, sustains and rules over the physical universe?

### **In Relation to the Church**

**(v.18-20)**

Paul asserts the universal *dominion* of Christ over the church. As such, He is to be submitted to as the ruler of your home.

<sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup> and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Christ's *POSITION* as head of the church (v.18) is described in terms of the *authority* of His position. He is over the church. He is its head. We know this through the *authentication* of His position. He has been raised from the dead. His resurrection is unique as it is the prototype, the first of its kind. That is, He was raised from the dead never to die again. He is our resurrected and living head.

Christ's position as head of the church has a glorious design. His being head means that He has come to have first place. Have we submitted to this purpose? Does the preeminence of Christ mean He has first place in our lives? The headship of Christ over the church means He is to have the rule and dominion, the first place in your homes. Does He?

Christ's *PROVISION* for the church (v.19-20) is the reason for His exaltation. We see His provision in the wonder of incarnation (v.19). God was pleased to dwell in Christ in all fullness. We also see His provision in the work of reconciliation (v.20). This is described in the *effects* of the cross where all that is to be reconciled is reconciled through Christ. He is the means for anyone or anything to be reconciled to God.<sup>1</sup> Thus, we have the *efficacy* of the cross. It is not merely a potential for all but rather is an actual for those included in its scope. It actually did what it was designed to do for those for whom it was intended.

## In Relation to the Christian

(v.21-23)

Paul turns to our individual *salvation* in Christ. Christ alone can bring each person in your home out of the darkness of sin into the light of salvation.

<sup>21</sup> And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, <sup>22</sup> he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, <sup>23</sup> if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

We have a terrible problem without Christ (v.21). Our inner condition is described as being alienated and hostile. This is “enemy” language. This is enemy combatant language. There is an active, inward hostility against God. This results in our outer conduct. We do evil deeds. Evil deeds, sinful acts, are expressions of active hostility to God.

This is a stunning interpretation of the condition and conduct in your home. The unbelievers in your home, including your children, are in open war against God. In the same way that our present government administration seems to be blind and in denial over the fact that we are in a war with Islamic extremists, many Christians fail to see that their homes are war zones where members of the family are conducting offensive evil against their Creator and Lord.

We have the wonderful purpose of Christ (v.22). He has reconciled us in order to present us holy and blameless before His Father. He has dealt with the warfare. In His body through His death, He secured peace between the people He redeems and His Father. He has done so, not just to bring peace, but also to bring purity.

Therefore we have the centrality of the gospel in the proclamation of Christ (v.23). This is what Pastor Devon will be talking about tonight. But notice that we must hear the gospel with faith, hope and perseverance. We must continue in it. We must not move from it.

This is a grave responsibility in our homes. We must hear, preach and serve the gospel for the sake of our families, as well as our church. We must hold fast and move forward in the gospel. We must learn it and live it in our homes.

## The Preeminence of Christ Declared

(1:24-29)

Against *anything* which adds to or replaces Christ as the content and method of our preaching, the preeminence of Christ is declared.

<sup>24</sup> Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, <sup>25</sup> of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, <sup>26</sup> the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. <sup>27</sup> To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. <sup>28</sup> Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. <sup>29</sup> For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

**In Relation to Our Perspective****(v.24-25a)**

Notice three key concepts that shape Paul's perspective on the preeminence of Christ in ministry. These will be essential elements in the centrality of Christ in our homes.

There will be an accepted suffering. We are to be absorbed with God and focused on others. Removes self-absorption in each sphere of life. A person who avoids Christ-like suffering in the home will avoid suffering in the church.

There will be an available serving. We are servants of the church as we serve God. We hear the word *ministry* very differently from the way they did! Being a servant in our homes will develop in us the qualities needed for serving in the church. A person who is not willing to be a Christ-like servant at home will not be a servant in the church.

There will be an accountable stewardship. We are accountable to the preeminent Christ. My ministry is a grant from God, not an inalienable right. My home is as well. A person who does not develop a clear accountability to God in the stewardship of his home will reject accountability in the church.

Does the preeminence of Christ cause us to accept suffering, be available and give accountability?

**In Relation to Our Preaching****(v.25b-28a)**

Can we say that Christ is preeminent in our preaching? The focus here is on the place of Paul in the plan and purpose of God. Yet, there is a clear application to our own teaching of truth in our homes. In the same way that Christ is central to the preaching and teaching in the church, it must be central in our homes as well.

Note the ministry of Paul's preaching. Paul's ministry is unique. It provides an example of accountability to God. Paul's responsibility was to complete the revelation of Christ in the Word of God. It is our responsibility to preach that complete revelation.

The centrality of Christ fills the message of our preaching and teaching (v.26-27). The idea of *mystery* is very important here. It means that there is an unfolding in the New Testament that was hidden then but is now revealed. Now, we teach that this means that what lay hidden in the shadows of the Old Testament is now revealed in the light of the New Testament. With our cross-centered shovels, we dig up the treasures hidden in the sands of redemptive history.

There is a weighty authority in its revelation (v.26-27a). These truths were unknown *in the past* but are revealed to the church. This is a part of our redemptive history moving toward the grand culmination in Christ.

There is a wonderful glory in its riches (v.27). Christ in us, His people ... Help and hope in midst of the mess.

The centrality of Christ governs the method of our preaching (v.28a). Here are the characteristics of true Biblical teaching. It is God's truth in the context of our lives. It is both *doctrinal* and *practical*. It is practical as implications are drawn from its doctrine.

Proclamation	Declaring the truth is such a way as to reflect the mind of God revealed in the Word of God
Admonition	Confront with truth in such a way as to bring about change
Instruction	Teach the truth in such a way as to bring about affirmation.

### **In Relation to Our Purpose (v.28b-29)**

What do we think of as the purpose of the ministry of the Word?

The result of our purpose is maturity as Christians (v.28b). It is a personal and corporate stability that comes through knowing Christ personally with accuracy and affection.

The responsibility of our purpose is to work hard at it (v.29). Paul says, “I labor and toil with God’s energy.”

Paul’s ministry is Christological, preaching oriented and focused on maturity. Our homes are the place where this is to begin. We are to work hard by God’s grace in teaching that is centered on Christ and aimed at producing maturity. We should be working hard at helping our spouses and our children to grow up. There is a personal maturity to be worked at. But even more important is to foster and cultivate a spiri

### **The Preeminence of Christ Demanded (2:1-7)**

2:1 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

### **The Primacy of Truth in Christ (v.1-3)**

Paul wants us to understand how important truth really is in our lives.

The primacy of this truth is illustrated by Paul’s own struggle (v.1). He is working hard as he seeks to teach and apply the centrality of Christ in our lives. So, he Paul shares this as an *illustration of*, an *instruction to*, and an *encouragement to* this quality of ministry.

Paul stresses its importance by highlighting his intent (v.2a). He is expecting both *personal and communal* benefit. As he did for them, his purpose is that your hearts will be encouraged and that you will be so united in love that you are involved (knit together). In our homes, as well as in our churches, this is a great aim: to be an encouragement, to be knit together in a garment of love, to come to fully understand Christ.

Its importance is imbedded in the content of its instruction (v.2b-3). Quite simply, all wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ. There is much to be explored in the relation of Christ to His Deity in the Trinity, to His humanity in the Incarnation, and to His Body in the Church. An exposition of the person of Christ will explain and answer all philosophical and scientific problems. In contrast to all the man-made systems of Christian living, He is the only answer as to how we ought to live.

## The Purpose of Accountability in Christ (v.4-5)

Placing Christ at the center of Christian truth and thinking makes demands, places responsibility on the believer.

<sup>4</sup> I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. <sup>5</sup> For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

He cautions them (v.4) about the potential danger facing them. Those who are moved away from the centrality of Christ are simply deceived. This happens because of a process designed to fool them. They can be led astray by arguments that “make sense”. We must be on the alert to those who develop the logic and argument apart from the Word, then support their conclusions from the scripture.

But he has a confidence in them (v.5). What a joy to be able to echo this with Paul. In my minds eye, I see your order and your faith. I see that you are holding the line against error. I see your faith, its *firmness* and *focus*.

## The Precept to Walk in Christ (v.6-7)

We grow in grace just as we began in grace.

<sup>6</sup> Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, <sup>7</sup> rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

As a result of the preeminence of Christ, we are commanded to walk in Him the same way we received Him (v.6). We heard of Him in the gospel. We learned of Him from faithful people. We believed in Him with steadfast faith. We were radically transformed in our character and conduct. Now, since Christ was the center of our salvation, He is also to be the center of our lifestyle.

What is that going to look like? The consequence is explained (v.7) in two of the major features of the centrality of Christ in our Christian life.

There is our growth in Christ that is expressed in these wonderful phrases (which we will save for another day). Each of these are essential for the centrality of Christ in any area of life. Those whose lifestyle is a growing walk with Christ will be:

- Rooted & Built-up in the Christ
- Strengthened in the Faith
- Instructed in the Truth

There will also be our gratitude to Christ. Gratitude is not the power for Christian living; it is the product and proof walking with Christ. It is the result of the grace that makes the growth possible.

The multi-faceted errors we face today all have the same design. Even within Christian circles, we are presented with many alternative ways to live the Christian life. Many of these ideas are simply re-verbalizations of old heresies. Paul equips, exhorts and encourages us *to live in Christ*.

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## Reflect and Respond

If someone were to live with you, would it be obvious to them that Christ is the center of your home? What evidence would they be looking for and would they find?

Christ being central in your home is totally a matter of Christ being preeminent in your life. It is the responsibility of each believer in the home, beginning with the parents and including the believing children. So, here are some important questions for each of you:

Do you desire for Christ to be preeminent and central to your life? What is competing for your attention and affection?

Can you describe how Christ is preeminent in a real, Biblically informed, personally applied way?

Do talk and teach each other in a way that acknowledges and declares that Christ is central to your life and home? Do you entertain the philosophies of the world as guiding your life or home?

In the areas that you are responsible for do you demand the centrality of Christ? Whose agenda governs your choices? Do you allow other interests to govern your decisions in your home?

In the centrality and preeminence of Christ, Colossians 1-2 are its pursuit and Colossians 3 is its practice. The preeminence of Christ is vertical realities and now it is horizontal relationships.

In what we set our minds on (v.1-4) leading to an eternal perspective;

In what we put to death (v.5-11) leading to holy purity;

In what we put on (v.12-14) leading to relational harmony;

In what controls us (v.15-17) leading to joyful thankfulness;

His peace – rules in our hearts;

His Word – rules in our one-anothering;

His Name – rules in all our lives.

In how we live in the home (v.18-21)

How does Paul apply the preeminence of Christ to the home? Colossians 3:18-21

When Christ is preeminent and central then wives will submit to their husbands (v.18).

When Christ is preeminent and central then husbands will love their wives and will not be harsh with them (v.19).

When Christ is preeminent and central then children will obey their parents (v.20).

When Christ is preeminence and central then parents will not provoke and therefore discourage, their children (v.21).

Let's pray for one another, asking that we may fully know what God's will is in our homes and how to do it with spiritual wisdom and understanding. Let's aim to live in ways that are worthy of the Lord. Let's do that by pleasing God, by bearing fruit in every good work and by growing in our knowledge of God. May God's power strengthen you for lasting endurance and patience in all that you do in your home. Fill your life with joyful thanks to the Father. Meditate on all He has done for you. He has authorized you to share in the saints' glorious inheritance. He has delivered you from the domain of darkness and transferred you to the kingdom of the Son He loves. In Him, you have redemption, the forgiveness of your sins. Thus, we will crave the preeminence of Christ, not just in our homes, but in our whole lives.

Let's teach, admonish and sing to one another, thinking about heaven, putting to death the old, putting on the new and living and loving in godly relationships. Express the centrality of Christ in your home by wives submitting, husbands loving, children obeying and parents not provoking.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> I am carefully making the assertion Paul is making. Christ is the sole and only means of reconciliation. This is what Paul is asserting. There are those who take this verse to mean that through the cross, there is a universal reconciliation. They make this assertion even though the text is not intended to imply universality of every thing in the universe, but rather the uniqueness of Christ as the sole reconciler.