

## The Supremacy of Christ

Colossians 1: 15 - 23

For some reason I've been hanging out to use something from MASTERCHEF in a sermon illustration. Maybe because it's taken up so much of my time. Maybe I thought I could justify spending so much time watching it if I could get an illustration out of it.

...

Well this week....BINGO. Masterchef fits beautifully to help us understand this passage.

Now ....if you've been living on another planet for about six months. Let me just explain. Masterchef is a popularity...I mean a " " cooking competition. To find the best amateur chef in Australia.

There's some sort of audition, some sort of selection process. I'm not really sure how that works. But out of that they choose 20 finalists.

And the 20 finalists. They all go into a masterchef house for until they get knocked out. You're locked up there, and You're away from your family and your friends. In the case of one guy Sam – he was away from his wife of ONE DAY when he went into the house.

So they're in a kind of isolation. And every day. They face different cooking challenges. And the judges look at what they've done. They taste it. And they decide who's the most popul..... I mean sorry, sorry...back up a bit. They decide who did best and the worst job. And they're gradually eliminated one by one.

So... – you're away from your family. And the challenges are really hard. You have to cook things you've never cooked before. You get a ridiculously short amount of time to cook your food. Sometimes an entire three course meal. You have to make up your menu ON THE SPOT. It has to be RESTAURANT QUALITY.

And you have to do it with the camera right on you. You have to do it with the judges making all sorts of smart comments and breathing down your neck.

And then at the end.... you have to go out the front of the group with your food while the judges pick you to pieces and sometimes even spit your food back out onto the plate. If they really don't like it.

Mentally it's hard, physically it's hard. It's stressful and it can be humiliating. You're out there for all to see your mistakes. The chances of failure are high. The chances of winning. Relatively LOW.

And the 20 endure all that. For two reasons. One for the PRESTIGE. And two for the PRIZE. That's their HOPE. They put themselves through all that...for the PRESTIGE and the PRIZE.

The prestige of being Australia's first MASTERCHEF.

And the PRIZE. \$100 000 dollars in cash amongst other things.

It's a great illustration because Paul's writing to a bunch of people who are facing the tough challenge of being Jesus followers.

The HARD WORK. Of transformation. Of RESISTING TEMPTATION. The ISOLATION of rejection. Of a life under the spotlight. The pressure of being watched. Opposition. Ridicule. It's all there.

And Paul's purpose in writing. We saw it last week. Is to give a boost. Is to remind them of the power, and the truth, and the grace and the hope of the gospel that they received. And to continue in it. Chapter 2 verse 6. Just as you received Jesus Christ as Lord, continue to live in him

Now the passage we're covering this morning. 15 to 23. Is not a new section in the letter. It's a continuation. The logic flows really from 1 to 23 and even right through to 2.5.

So it's important for us to get that connection. Paul's continuing a line of thought here. And I'll draw that out for us in a moment. But first let me just say. In these 8 verses. Paul's taking us to the heart. Paul's taking us To the PILE DRIVING FORCE. To the shock spreading epicenter ... of the letter. As he talks about the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ the source of Christian hope. The locomotive power of the gospel. In fact as he paints this stunning, majestic picture of the risen Lord Jesus. It's almost like we're forced to praise him simply by hearing these words.

So first of all. We're going to look closely at this picture Paul's painted here. But we need to see how it fits in the logic of the letter.

1 to 15. We looked at last week. Paul points out what God's done in them through the gospel they received. He says thank God. It's the same thing that's happening all over the world by the same message. The gospel bearing fruit. So be encouraged. Keep going.

Then he gives them a run down on how he's been praying. That they'd be filled with the knowledge of God's will. To keep bearing fruit. To please God. To have endurance and patience. To be thankful.

And just as an aside. There's a little hint of just how much it takes to get us to be thankful. Paul says we pray from verse 11 that you'd be strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the father.

Doesn't come easy for us. Takes all God's might. To get us to be thankful.

And so Paul's encouraging them – But he's building to something. I noticed as I went over and over the logic of this passage. I noticed this week. It jumped out at me...how as Paul heads towards this picture of Jesus. He's actually building. The first 15 verses are jam packed with little gospel nuggets. Little gospel sound bites. Paul would have done well in advertising I reckon. I can count in those 15 verses six descriptions of the gospel. Six ingredients if you like. Of the gospel they've believed. That's bearing fruit.

And I want to walk you through them quickly.

First off. If you've got your bible. 1 to 5 he talks about the faith and love that come from verse 5. The faith and love that come from the HOPE OF HEAVEN.

That you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you. BING. There's number one. And two as well. The gospel is the word of truth.

A description of the message. And that truth concerns the hope of heaven.

Paul says it's bearing fruit all over the place and he slips another one in at the end of verse six. See if you can pick it up. He says

...just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's GRACE..... in all its truth. It's the word of truth, which brings about a hope stored in heaven. By God's GRACE.

Three more to go. Jump down now to verse 12. Paul says we've been praying for you so you'll please God so you'll endure. And give thanks to the Father

...WHO HAS what? Who has QUALIFIED YOU TO SHARE IN THE INHERITANCE of the saints in the kingdom of light.

There's an explanation of what God's done in the gospel in his grace. Keep going. Verse 13 for he has.

And your getting like a broken record now Paul.

For he has. What's he done. He's ....rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,

There's a one liner that's a great picture of the gospel. If someone asks you what the gospel is. There's a great little one liner. The picture of RESCUE.

Verse 14 in whom we have REDEMPTION. The forgiveness of sins.

Here's the package. The gospel is the good news. It's God's gracious truth of the hope of heaven. Through which the Father has qualified you for the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. He has Rescued you OUT OF the dominion of darkness. And brought you into the kingdom of the Son he loves.

And for the next nine verses. It's that son. Who's the subject.

IT's IN HIM and from him. That all those other things flow out and have their fulfillment.

IT's the person of Jesus HIMSELF. That gives the greatest encouragement, the best reason to the Christian...to persevere.

And I've listed six things there on your outline, that Paul wants us to know about Jesus.

And we'll run through them.

Number one. And we're in verse 15. He is the image of the invisible God. Sounds like a bit of a contradiction doesn't it.

But if you know your old testament stories, you'll know that's how it works. God speaks to Moses from a burning bush. And Moses sees no form. When Israel are saved from Egypt and they get to Mount Sinai. All they hear is a voice.

In Deuteronomy 4 as they're about to go in to the promised land. God reminds them.

**Deuteronomy 4:15-16** <sup>15</sup> You saw no form of any kind the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire. Therefore watch yourselves very carefully, <sup>16</sup> so that you do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol, an image of any shape, whether formed like a man or a woman,

And he goes on and he says...whatever you do, don't make any kind of image to represent me God says. Images made by men will always misrepresent God in some way. By their very nature they bring him down. In the same way a statue of Wally Lewis which can't talk can't hear can't move. can't hold a candle to the real thing.

And now Paul says. Jesus is the image of the invisible God.

Adam and Eve were made IN GOD'S IMAGE. But Jesus is THE IMAGE.

Now it's interesting because the gospels don't include a picture of Jesus anywhere. No diagrams. No physical descriptions of what Jesus looked like. So it can't be that we need to see the person to see the invisible God.

The point is. Jesus. Walked, and he ruled, and he lived a life. In such a way. That when you see that. You see God. Jesus is the image of God. Not just a teacher to tell you things about God. He's not just a prophet to point you the way to God. Jesus said – if you've seen me you've seen the Father. I and the Father are one.

He's the image, and the firstborn over all creation. Which doesn't mean as the Jehovas witnesses read this verse. As the Arians in about the third century thought. That Jesus is the first created being. That's not what it says. HE's the firstborn OVER CREATION. In other words. Over all creation – he has the RIGHTS..... IN the same way a firstborn son used to have the rights to the inheritance of the family estate. The point is. IT'S ALL HIS.

And verse 16 gives the justification for that.

For by him all things were created. Not only is he the IMAGE of the creator. He's got the rights of the creator as well. And not just of the things we know about.

By all things Paul MEANS... and he says there.

Both things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.

Which makes it easy as a parent. When the kids ask. Who made the trees? Jesus. Who made the sky? Jesus. Who made the...JESUS.

Doesn't matter what it is. Jesus made it.

Whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; ALL THINGS...all things... were created BY HIM and..FOR HIM.

Which is a little reminder there that I think we all need to hear from time to time. It's not all about you. All things....including you....were made for Jesus.

Next he is. HE is BEFORE ALL THINGS.

Those three words at the start of the Bible. In the beginning. Jesus was there. BY HIM it was all made.

And in him. All things hold together.

And this picture of Jesus just gets bigger and bigger. HE made all of it. It's all FOR HIM. And he holds it all together.

If that's true. Then the strength the atheist uses to shake their fist at God. Comes from him. Who sustains all things. Isn't that ironic.

The nails that held Jesus on the cross. Were held together, were held in place by Jesus if that's true.

The implications of that statement being true. Are mind blowing.

Last he is. 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. Or more literally. The pre-eminence. The first place of honour.

I don't know if you noticed the firsts on the way through. Paul says Jesus has the rights as of the firstborn. He's BEFORE all things. And now the reminder that as the head of the church the risen Jesus is the firstborn of the new creation as well, the firstborn from among the dead. So that in everything he might have the supremacy. The PRE-EMINENCE.

I used to have a t-shirt when I was about four. My parents bought it for me. And it had written on it the words you can only wear if your under 5. It said. I'm number one. Why try harder?

Even then I knew it was a joke.

Because that place. Is reserved for someone else. Someone bigger. Someone stronger. Someone smarter. First place rightfully belongs to Jesus.

That's the point.

I said before it's the person of Jesus HIMSELF. That gives the greatest encouragement, the best reason to the Christian...to persevere. But that's not quite the full story. Paul's not quite finished.

The gospel's not quite finished. Because the full glory of the good news. Is completed in what comes next. From verse 19.

The truth and the grace of the gospel. The hope of heaven, the inheritance, the rescue. Comes in what this Son does. Here's the climax from verse 19. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

That's the fullness of the gospel. The pre-eminent one. The commander in chief. The numero uno. Brought all that power to bear. Unleashed his mighty power. At the cross to reconcile sinners. And all things.

Understanding who Jesus is, and what he did. Is the power of the gospel. And the reason to persevere in it. To continue.

And if you're a Christian that's what GOD THE SON, this Jesus Paul's been talking about. The pre-eminent one. Has done, in you.

And that's what Paul says. There in 21.

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.

Once he says. The reality is you're either a reconciled friend or you're still an enemy. There's no half way. And he says that's what you were.

That's the nature of a rescue isn't it. You get rescued from being washed out to sea. You get rescued from being in a blazing fire. From great danger. And how much greater danger can there be than being an enemy of the one who made all things? Who's over and before everything? Once you were.

But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.

If you continue.....

And we're back to the main point.

If you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.

Because the truth is. Those challenges are many and varied. And you see it. And I've seen it. And Paul points it out in his letters. And that's why he's saying all this.

Because some people throw in the towel. And they don't continue.

In MasterChef. There was one guy Nic. If you go to the website. Under his name it has one word – Under Nic's name – it just says – WALKED.

Nic couldn't handle it. In the middle of the competition. He walked out. He gave up on the prize.

And after listening to what Paul's been saying here. What a tragedy. To walk away from the person....of Jesus. And what he's got in store for you.

No one I don't think plans to do that. You don't just wake up one morning and say. OH I think I'll be an agnostic today. It doesn't happen like that.

What happens, is that gradually, you lose sight of the gospel. Maybe other things take centre stage for you. You're career. You're stuff. The business of life. And the pre-eminent one. In your mind becomes smaller and smaller. And less and less important.

You can't walk out of here this morning and say that didn't really apply to me this morning. If you're not a Christian. You have to do something with this. Maybe you thought Jesus was something less than the picture painted here. If that's the case then it's clear what you have to do. The gospel is a call to sinners. To be reconciled. To go from being God's enemy. To God's friend and part of the kingdom of this Son. By believing in Jesus.

If you're a Christian. You're a RECOVERING SINNER. Maybe YOU THOUGHT Jesus was something less than the picture painted here. Or you FORGOT. Maybe you're struggling. Maybe you're finding it really hard. You've been living with Jesus as not much more than a good luck charm. This is here for YOU. Once you were alienated from God. Now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body. Through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation – if you

continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.