

The Bible Companion Series

# *THE PRE-EMINENCE OF CHRIST*

**"And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.  
And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the  
beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he  
might have the preeminence."**

Colossians 1:17,18

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## **A Study of the Letter to the Colossians**

**A Bible-Believing Study Guide**

**an AV 1611 Bible Companion**

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# **Colossians Chapter One**

## **The Life of the Minister of the Gospel – Part 2**

### **(Colossians 1:23-29)**

#### **I. Introduction (Col 1:23)**

- A. Paul now makes his letter a bit personal
- B. Strangely, Paul is suffering persecution, prison, etc for Christians he has never met
- C. And takes the time to explain what his calling is as a minister of the Gospel – because so many Christians do not actually know what “the ministry” is all about!

#### **II. Last Week**

##### **A. The Meaning of Minister (Col 1:23)**

- 1. Servant. Someone who serves, waits on people like a waiter, stewards, runs errands

##### **B. Who Are Ministers in a Church?**

- 1. ALL believers are servants – whether they realise it or not
- 2. A great church is FULL of servants, NOT leaders!
- 3. Some take on roles of leadership and the greatest... will be the servants of all!

##### **C. The Making of the Minister (Col 1:25,29)**

All great ministers are MADE, fashioned, forged, moulded by the work of God on and through them as they yield like clay to the hand of the potter.

- 1. Salvation
- 2. Calling
- 3. Dispensing from God – all that you will need to serve, God will provide
- 4. Suffering
- 5. Focus on serving Jesus
- 6. Approved by your Church
- 7. Supernaturally Sustained

#### **III. Lesson**

##### **A. The Great Life of a Minister of the Gospel (1:24-28)**

- 1. The Pastor, Minister is a gift to a church (Eph 4:7-11)
  - a. Worthy of double honour (1Tim 5:17)
  - b. Don't ever take all the people in a church who have a servant spirit for granted
  - c. Epaphras was a divine gift to the people of Colosse, and especially to the Christians of Colosse!
  - d. Ordained elders are capable of pastoring, and are God's gift to any church (Acts 14:23; Tit 1:5)
- 2. We live a life of Rejoicing (Col 1:24; Acts 5:41) – most important! Love what we do!
  - a. We encouraging ourselves in the Lord (1Sam 3:6)
  - b. We rejoice because of our walk with God, not because of successes, or lack of troubles!
  - c. That does not mean that we are never down, but they we are determined to rejoice, even when suffering and hurting

- d. The best ministers are joyful ones – not just stern, harsh ones
3. Ministers are living fulfilment of the effectiveness of the word of God! (1:25)
  - a. Walking, talking miracles of salvation – changed lives
  - b. We have a history of getting answers to prayer
  - c. We have been gifted for service – did not come natural
  - d. Prove that God’s word is right and worth trusting
  - e. NOT wealthy, but poor
  - f. NOT popular, but loved nonetheless
  - g. Every Christian should be all these things, but especially its Pastor
4. A life of Teaching (Col 1:26-28)
  - a. THIS is what everybody wants – to SPEAK for GOD and “explain” things to people, and have everyone’s admiration, and awe. But you don’t deserve it unless you are willing to be a servant in every area!
    - 1) Everyone wants to brag on their Bible knowledge
    - 2) Few want to pick up a BROOM and a MOP and a TOILET BRUSH!
    - 3) MOST of the ministry is making up for the lack of effort by other people
    - 4) VERY FEW people care about the PEOPLE in a church like the Pastor does
  - b. Bible Teaching means
    - 1) “Making known...”
    - 2) Actually FEEDING people – not just anything WE want to say, but line upon line, truth upon truth
      - a) Jesus asked Peter, and all Bible teachers to FEED His sheep and lambs
      - b) Paul told the pastors and teachers at Ephesus to FEED the Church of God (Acts 20:28)
    - 3) Revealing the mystery of God
      - a) Hid from ages and generations
      - b) Now is made clear – but only to His people
      - c) A very rich truth
      - d) To explain the mystery that has been hidden, but now is open and manifest for all to see and learn
      - e) That Christ is IN us, and HE is the hope of all rejoicing!
    - 4) Ministering the gospel to people (Rom 15:16) – soul-winners (1Cor 3:5)
      - a) Opening people’s understanding – their eyes (Acts 26:18)
      - b) Giving people hope in Christ
    - 5) Commanding the Scriptures (Tit 2:15) - Getting the church to fulfil / obey / live by the word of God – no matter how hard (1Tim 4:6)
  5. A life of Preaching – NOT just teaching (2Tim 4:1-4)
    - a. Sometimes standing alone as a voice in the wilderness
    - b. Warning everybody – even to the point of upsetting them
    - c. Teaching everybody – Good preaching includes good teaching

- d. Using all wisdom – using wise words, careful words, precise words and truths to convince people of the rightness of God and Christ!
  - e. All so that we can present every man perfect
    - 1) Holy
    - 2) Pure
    - 3) Godly
    - 4) Mature
    - 5) Ready to serve as well (2Tim 2:23)
6. A lot of Labour
- a. Studying is hard – labouring in the word – checking yourself
    - 1) Rightly dividing the word
    - 2) Testing everything you conclude
    - 3) Questioning yourself
    - 4) Not saying sensational things for effect, but clear, plain truth
  - b. Studying is lonely – just you and the Bible, and some books, and a lot of prayer
  - c. GLADLY make up for the lack of effort by others who are usually so flippant about their Bible lessons, or preaching, or teaching
  - d. Every hour than a man preaches usually requires EIGHT in preparation
  - e. Every hour of Children’s Church usually requires 4-5 hours in preparation – to plan the singing, the lesson, the craft or activity, etc.
  - f. And then there is the effort to go out and get people to come! Soul-winning, visitation, going after missing people
7. A lot of Concern and Burdens
- a. As a minister, you will have serious CARE for the body of Christ – the church
  - b. If you only help in a ministry because you have been asked, or because you are being paid, then you are not a true minister – you are a fly-by-night that at a better opportunity will be the first to leave!
  - c. Philp 2:19-21
8. A life of Suffering – THIS IS A BIG DEAL
- a. Try and Measure up to the sufferings of Christ for the church body
  - b. Instead of running away from the suffering, Paul dived into every one that came his way – do YOU?
  - c. Why did Paul put up with so much trouble?
    - 1) To be a much needed example for other believers! Because the persecutions and attacks needed to be endured as an example for others to take heart
    - 2) To prove his calling! Suffering PROVES our calling – not to be great success stories, with accolades and men’s admiration – but just the opposite!
  - d. Look at two lists of what Paul endured in his ministry:

2Cor 6:4-10	2Cor 11:23-29
In much patience	In labours more abundant
In afflictions	in stripes above measure
In necessities	in prisons more frequent
In distresses	in deaths oft.

<p>In stripes                  In imprisonments                  In tumults                  In labours                  In watchings                  In fastings                  By pureness                  By knowledge                  By longsuffering                  By kindness                  By the Holy Ghost                  By love unfeigned,                  By the word of truth                  By the power of God                  By the armour of righteousness on the right                  hand and on the left                  By honour and dishonour                  By evil report and good report                  As deceivers, and yet true;                  As unknown, and yet well known                  As dying, and, behold, we live                  As chastened, and not killed;                  As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing                  As poor, yet making many rich                  As having nothing, and yet possessing all                  things.</p>	<p>Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes                  save one.                  Thrice was I beaten with rods                  once was I stoned                  thrice I suffered shipwreck                  a night and a day I have been in the deep;                  In journeyings often                  in perils of waters                  in perils of robbers                  in perils by mine own countrymen                  in perils by the heathen                  in perils in the city                  in perils in the wilderness                  in perils in the sea                  in perils among false brethren;                  In weariness and painfulness                  in watchings often                  in hunger and thirst                  in fastings often                  in cold and nakedness.                  Beside those things that are without, that                  which cometh upon me daily, the care of all                  the churches.                  Who is weak and I am not weak?                  who is offended, and I burn not?</p>
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- e. If you are not willing to suffer as a servant of all, then DON'T be a minister of the Gospel!
  - f. If you are ever going to start a true church, you are going to suffer!!!
  - g. If you are a church planter, it will be hard (READ HUDSON TAYLOR'S ADVERT FOR MEN TO COME)
  - h. If you are married to a pastor, church planter, missionary, it WILL be hard
  - i. If you are the child of a pastor, church planter, missionary, it WILL be hard
  - j. But wow! What a blessing it is to be that close to the centre of God's will and watch Him work!
9. But best of all, you will be in the core group - A great fellowship with other servants (2Cor 8:4) who minister to the saints

## B. The Goal of the Life of the Minister (Col 1:28)

1. To present EVERY man perfect in Christ Jesus (2Cor 5:17)
  - a. Just to present the Gospel is awesome! But it is not the end!
  - b. Explain the mystery of the Bible to the lost
  - c. Open spiritual eyes
  - d. Get them to repent and believe this Book
  - e. Teach them how to live by this Book
  - f. And constantly iron all the wrinkles
  - g. All so that we can present them perfect (Heb 13:7,17)
2. To not miss one life – go after wayward, discouraged, falling sheep as much as humanly possible!

3. The whole world heard the Gospel in the first century!!!

- a. How is that even possible?
- b. The Reach of the Gospel (Acts 1:8; 8:4) had reached this city of Colosse
  - 1) Every Christian was preaching
  - 2) Persecution kept the Gospel moving (Acts 8:4)
  - 3) Throughout Asia
  - 4) Trade carried Christian workers everywhere with the Gospel
  - 5) Kings, chieftains, princes, and VIP's heard and responded!
  - 6) And then "in ALL the world!" What an accomplishment!
    - a) History records that Patrick's Dad was already a Christian, and churches abounded all over Scotland! When Patrick came to Ireland, he was not the first to preach here, but the most effective!
    - b) Western India heard of the Gospel from the Apostle Thomas in 45 AD
    - c) China heard in 52 AD – in 638, a monument to Christianity called the Nestorian Monument stated there were churches in a hundred cities in China!
    - d) That means the Gospel went everywhere in just 30 years! NOT that everyone got saved, but that each and every culture and nation was touched with the preaching of the Gospel!

**C. The Strength of a Minister (1:29) – the best part!**

1. We are insufficient (2Cor 3:5)
  - a. 2Co 3:5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;
2. We are weak (Ex 4:10; John 15:5)
  - a. Ex 4:10 And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.
  - b. John 15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.
3. We are frail – as was King David (Ps 39:4)
4. We are but dust – at our best!
5. So, where is our strength?
  - a. In our calling
  - b. In our faith
  - c. In our dependency
  - d. In our waiting, patience
  - e. In our Christ! (Philp 4:13)
    - 1) 2Cor 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.
    - 2) Col 1:29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.
    - 3) 2Co 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:
    - 4) Eph 1:19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

- 5) 2Cor 12:9,10 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.
- 6) 1Co 15:55-57 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **D. Principles of Life for the Leaders in a Church – from the Pastor down**

##### **1. Love Your family**

- a. You are MARRIED – at least you OUGHT to be
  - b. A Church leader should improve their spouse's life.
  - c. A husband should provide, protect, and parent even though he is a Minister.
  - d. A wife should prioritize her husband, to be his helper, should like herself, have confidence, and a sense of destiny, because of her husband's calling.
2. **Be firm and consistent in discipline.** A parent who fails to provide godly discipline is an accessory to their children's destruction. Pastoral parents need to prioritize their home leadership above other responsibilities.
  3. **Teach your family.**
  4. **Submit to others all the time.** Be ready to be told what to do and be taught by others all your life. You will never outgrow submission and teach-ability.
  5. **Be faithful with what you are and have right now.** If you desire to serve in leadership, learn to follow written and verbal directions at your current post. God loves to use leaders that have learned to follow.
  6. **Express your vision.** Leaders should never assume that followers know, what they know. Write the vision and make it plain because they cannot see what you see unless you clearly communicate it with them.
  7. **Be heard.** Good leaders speak clearly with the right volume at the right time. You need to learn how to enunciate with the right tone in order to be understood.
  8. **Love hospitality.** Practice hospitality by making others feel welcome. Receive others and treat them as you'd like to be treated. Good leaders make you feel welcome in their presence (home, office, and church services).
  9. **In times of suffering, people don't need your cliché Christian sayings.** Lend a hand to help, give of your time and money, give a shoulder to cry on, and by all means, pray for those who are suffering.
  10. **Love being a servant most of all!** If you resent being a servant, you will not become the leader you were meant to be. Servanthood is your calling.
  11. **Have integrity!** Competency without character is useless. Regardless of how gifted you are, without the godly character of a servant you can't be trusted.
  12. **Tame your tongue or be left behind.**
  13. **Jesus followers are to be known by their love for each other** and not for how they judge one another. Do your best to reflect His love for others in your daily behaviour.
  14. **Truly great leaders do not seek after power.** They have power thrust upon them as a result of destiny. Cooperate with God's plans but do not insist upon power.