

“Christ’s Leadership: The Head of the Church” Ephesians 1:22-23, Sermon Notes
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Saving Grace Bible Church
May 14th, 2017
Morning Worship Service

Text:

“And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” (Ephesians 1:22-23 NAU)

Text Purpose: To show the place of Christ as the head of the Church

Sermon Purpose: To understand how Christ is the head of the Church

Introduction

We have been through a lot together since this Church started 6.5 years ago

- Part of my D Min program had me do a survey on the Church and we started with 9 families - we currently have about 86 families
- More incredibly the church has doubled in the last two years
- We have added two more staff members
- If you have spent any time in the nursery or children’s area of the Church you quickly see there is a lot going on

I am convinced we have great days ahead

- We are established as a Church
- The ministry is maturing in many ways
- The Lord is adding to our number
- Our identity as a ministry which teaches God’s Word and encourages people to live out God’s Word has been demonstrated for years now
- Our partnerships with ministries that are likeminded are growing
 - We are working on bringing people here to train them for ministry
 - Grace Community Church, Grace Immanuel Bible Church, Word of Grace Bible Church, and many more to come
- The ministry has matured

When you are a part of a Church which has existed for many years you are not aware of what it took to get the ministry started

- But every ministry had a beginning
- Every ministry had people put in the work to organize and administrate
- Every ministry needed to define its doctrine and direction

When a church starts it really is in its infancy

- Rarely is a church able to start with a fulltime pastor
- Needs to raise up leaders
- Needs to determine its direction of ministry and doctrinal commitments
- Needs to find leaders who hold these values and can invest in the Church
- Then you need to establish the various ministries to encourage and build the Church spiritually
- Then you have the unique ministry God creates for the Church
 - This is what the Bible calls the Work of the Service
 - Every ministry is different and God provides each ministry with unique challenges and responsibilities
 - Some churches in this area have no young families so their ministry is different than ours

It takes time for a Church to grow

- And there are constant pressures on the Church
- There is naturally immaturity among the people – they need to grow
 - Learn to follow – Everyone leads then nobody is leading and everyone is pulling in their own direction
 - Churches get cranky people who come to Church and they want to be catered to and when a church fails to give them what they want the church is labeled unloving
 - Some people come to the Church because they want to be important in the Church
 - Small ministries are vulnerable to these kinds of people
 - People who think that they have certain gifts and our ministry needs them
 - People who need to learn the truth
 - People who need to learn to love others

It takes time to grow

- Immaturity among the leaders – they need to grow
 - Grow in our understanding of doctrine and how to explain doctrine
 - Grow in our ability to minister to different kinds of people
 - Grow in our ability to work together and respond to the growing demands of ministry life
 - Grow in our ability to shepherd the Church through the challenges and difficulties of life

It takes time to grow. It takes time for a ministry to mature

- It is not easy
- It takes time for a ministry to grow and mature and unless we are growing the ministry will not be growing either
- There are increasing pressures every day

I marvel at our Church life

- Ministry starts small and we start growing
- The pastor works full time and ministers to the Church on the weekend
- The Church continues to grow and the demands get heavier
 - Counseling load increases
 - There is a constant need for parenting classes, marriage classes, new believer's classes, discipleship classes, counseling classes, Bible study classes
 - Eventually the Church is at the point where as an act of faith they have to step out and bring on the pastor fulltime
 - People make big sacrifices to see the ministry survive
 - There is a challenge on the family as sacrifices are made
 - There have been countless sacrifices made by different people to make Saving Grace Bible Church what it is today

A Church does not get to this point without many people working together and cooperating together towards a common goal. Which in our case is to glorify God by teaching His Word and walking in His ways

- The pressures in Church life keep mounting

Have you ever gone on vacation and then realized that you were doing so many things and now you get a break? It is a good pressure because it grows you

- Kids ministries grow and we need leaders
- Women's ministries grow and their needs to be supported
- Men's ministries grow and there are needs for greater leadership
- Facilities need to be managed
- Resources needs to be managed

Every week the Church keeps growing and Lord willing it keeps moving forward

While we need leaders and people, these are not our greatest need for a healthy Church

Ultimately what the Church needs more than anything is the favor of the Lord Jesus Christ who is the head of the Church

- We are nothing without the work of Christ
- This is the most important truth
- The most important help to the ministry is the favor of Jesus Christ upon His Church

Paul tells us in the Book of Ephesians how Christ blesses the Church and builds the Church

Over the next three weeks I want to look at:

1. Christ's Leadership: The Head of the Church
2. Christ's Gifts: Equipping the Church
3. Christ's Body: The People of the Church

We will grab our insights from the Book of Ephesians

“And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” (Ephesians 1:22-23 NAU)

This passage of Scriptures teaches us that Jesus is the head of a glorious body which reflects Him here and now on this earth, a body which is dynamically growing and maturing because of its vital union with its head

- This passage is about the glorious church and the work of the Church in conjunction with its head
- This passage teaches of the Church's privilege through Christ and of the greatness of the power of God demonstrated towards us in Jesus Christ

In this section Paul teaches us how we should fill our prayers:

This section starts in verse 15 and goes to vs 23

Vs 15 Paul Starts with telling us this is his prayer

Vs 16

1. We pray for a greater awareness of God and the character of God. – His Character vs 17
2. We pray for a greater understanding of the plan of God- His Will vs 18
3. We pray for a greater understanding of the power of God to fulfill the plans consistent with His will – His power vs 19
4. Pray for a greater awareness of the work of the Son vs 20-23

This morning we are here to talk about the greatness of Jesus Christ

Outline

1. Surpassing Greatness of Jesus Christ
2. Superior Function of Jesus Christ
3. Supreme Example of Jesus Christ

1. Surpassing Greatness of Jesus Christ

“And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church.” (Ephesians 1:22 NAU)

If there is ever any doubt about the greatness of Jesus Christ this verse clears it up

- And if there is ever a doubt about what the Apostles thought of Christ this verse clears it up
- Now remember Paul has said the Father demonstrated His power by raising Jesus Christ from the dead
- God has demonstrated His power by placing Jesus Christ at the Father’s right hand above all rulers, and authorities, and above every name that will ever be named

But the Father will also place all things under subjection to Christ

This is the surpassing greatness of Jesus Christ. He is to be the ruler of all things

The text says the Father placed all things in subjection under His feet. Vs 22

The word for “Subjection” is the Greek work (ὑποτάσσω) hu\po\tas\so

Hupotasso – to place oneself under

To come under in subordination, all authorities are placed under subjection to Christ

- They are all made accountable to the Lord Jesus Christ
- The surpassing greatness of Jesus Christ is that all things will give an account to Him
- Or to say another way, everyone and everything will give an account before Him. The Father has placed all things before Him

The idea of hupotasso is subjection. Here in verse 22 Paul says everything has been placed under the subjection of Jesus Christ

By necessity this means that Christ is victor over all

Now we are going to think about the implications of each of these points at the end but let me give you a question to ponder:

- If Christ is the head over all things and the head of the Church, shouldn't the Church naturally be obedient to Him?
- Let me put it like this: These are scary words friends, but in a Church which belongs to Christ, no one is untouchable
- No one in the Church should rival the surpassing greatness of Christ

2. The Superior Function of Jesus Christ

“And gave Him as Head over all things to the Church.” vs 22

Now some have made a big deal about the exact wording of this verse to say it does not say Jesus is the Head of the Church

- It says He is the head over all things
- He is given to the Church
- So they go on to conclude we cannot make reference to Jesus being head of the Church
- By this then they would claim that the leaders of the Church direct the Church as we are acting on Christ's behalf
 - So Christ is not leading the Church He gives that job to us, the leaders of the Church

But I do not agree with these folks

- First I admit the text says Jesus is the head of all things
- He is the head of everything and all things come under subjection to Him
- This naturally would include the Church
- Here it says Christ was given to the Church and then Paul says in verse 23 Which is His body
- Paul makes it perfectly clear that while Christ is the head of everything it is the Church which is called His body
- But Eph 5:23 is plain “Christ is the head of the Church”
 - So this is a mute argument

The Church as the body of Christ emphasizes a vital relationship between the head and the body

- The body does not live without a head
- This relationship also speaks of an organic relationship
 - Where does the head stop and the body begin?
 - The point is that the head and the body are inseparably linked and difficult to separate
 - The body is to be closely tied to the head

- Just as each one of us have come to be a part of the body because of the work of Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God

It is an organic relationship, a vital union between the head of the Church and the body

The One who rules over the entire universe, the One who is head over the material and the immaterial worlds is the One who is the head of the Church which is His body

Friends, this is an incredible gift given to the Church by the Father. The One who rules the whole world is specially inclined to us as His body

- This is why we seek to honor Him

Now hold on to this thought because we are going to come back and look at the implications of this truth for us

3. Supreme Example of Jesus Christ

“Which is His Body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” (Ephesians 1:23 NAU)

Now this is an amazing verse

It has left many commentators baffled on how to understand

After reading this section it is easy to see how some preachers might pray for understanding to gain help from God to understand what Paul prayed when Paul asked for the Church to be filled with understanding

“God help me understand what understanding the Apostle Paul wanted us to understand.”

After reading this section it is clear that Paul is not talking about Jesus filling up the weak voids of our life at all. No Paul has something bigger in mind here

Look at the text Paul goes on and says:

Which is His body, the fullness of Him vs 23

- Fullness here is not speaking of a spatial relationship
 - It is not saying we are empty and He is filling us up
- He is not talking about a full cup with more being pushed into the cup
- First He is saying the Church is the body of Christ
- Second the Church expands the greatness of Jesus Christ

It is saying this, Jesus came and did a great work and now He is doing a great work through us

- The fullness of His work is now at work through us
- You thought His work was completed at the cross or the resurrection. No friends it has just begun

- When you look at the greatness or the expanse of an object you are seeing the fullness of that object
- For example if you were to stand at the edge of the grand canyon and see the whole grand canyon you will be seeing the “Fullness of the Grand Canyon”
- You look at the window of an airplane and you see the fullness of the earth
- When you are on a ship in the middle of the ocean you see the fullness of the sea
- To see the fullness of something is to see the greatness of its reach

When we are talking about the fullness of Christ we are not talking about some mind puzzle where we are a full Cup and Christ fills all of our cups without spilling and look how great Christ is that he can do this logically impossible task as if we are to be amazed because Christ does something logically impossible

- No what this passage is showing is that the greatness of Jesus Christ does not stop with the God\Man Jesus
- If you think Jesus stops with the historical Jesus who died, was buried, rose again on the third day, ascended into heaven and awaits a return, you are greatly mistaken
- You see how great this passage is
- The greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ is the extension of Christ which fills each and everyone one of His believers in the Church!

The example of Christ is alive in us as we live for Christ

- Gal 2:20 – “it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me”
- 2 Cor 5:17 “the old things have passed away behold new things have come”
- 1 Jn 3:1-3

Jesus as the supreme example fills us and is working that example out in each and every one of us as we learn His Word and apply His Word

- The fullness of Jesus Christ filtering out into every member of the body of Christ
- So we can say it this way, a healthy Church functioning as God has designed is a reflection of the Lord Jesus Christ
- Why do we put a premium on teaching the truth and living the truth it is because by the truth we are sanctified into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ
- We as the Church are an extension of the Lord Jesus Christ
- We are the fullness of Christ
- When the world sees us they see Jesus Christ

Conclusion

Outline

1. Surpassing Greatness of Jesus Christ
2. Superior Function of Jesus Christ
3. Supreme Example of Jesus Christ

Now friends let us take a few moments to consider the many wonderful implications of this rich text

Practical implications of the passage we are looking at:

1. Your spiritual health is impacted by the Church you a part of

- a. The Church is the body of Christ and each member of the Church is to be living like Jesus Christ
- b. If the Church is not living like Christ, if the people are not seeking Christ, If Christ is not ruling and reigning in the Church, your spiritual health is going to greatly suffer. (Many of you see this by how spiritually weak you are even though you have been in the Lord 20, 30, or 40 years)
- c. Healthy Church will lead to a healthy Spiritual life
- d. Dead part of the body will cause the rest of the body to suffer as it tries to compensate for the loss
- e. If you want a healthy spiritual life you want to be in a place where the truth is taught clearly, where the truth is defended faithfully, and where the truth is practiced diligently

"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. ¹⁸"As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹"For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth." (John 17:17-19 NAU)

- f. A vital spiritual ministry will be presenting the truth of God and sanctifying the people of God with it

2. All the vital signs for the body come from the head not the body. The Church finds its direction and life from Christ not from polling itself

Let's be clear here, what I am saying is that what we do is defined by Christ. Some of the particular details He leaves to us

- Jesus did not tell us to buy this building
- He does not come down and talk to me
- I have never heard the voice of God
- I would probably freak out if I did
- The body does not tell the head how to operate and grow
- The head tells the body
- The muscle does not flex until the brain sends a signal
- The hand does not grasp unless the head gives direction
- The head controls the Church not the body
- We should not be reinventing Church ministry we should be turning to the example of Christ and following His commands
- We should be taking our lead from the head of the Church, Jesus Christ

3. **The Church is not the building.** The Church is not the programs. The Church is not the officers of the Church (ie pastor, elder, bishops, deacons etc). Nor is the Church its doctrines
 - a. The Church is every born again believer in Christ
 - b. Those who have listened to the truth and believed the gospel of salvation vs 13
 - c. Those who have been sealed with the Holy Spirit
 - d. The Church is made up of regenerate members who have Christ living in them
 - e. The name Saving Grace Bible Church is the name by which this local gathering of believers has chosen to identify themselves
 - f. We who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are the Church, the body of Christ, the extension of Him, we are His fullness lived out and He fills each and every believer in this room

4. **If Jesus is the greatness of the Church we should not love anything more than Christ**
 - a. We have to be careful we do not make the Church about ourselves and our desires
 - b. The Church is for Christ
 - c. It reflects Christ and should be leading people to Jesus Christ

5. **Since we are the body of Christ and are filling up the body of Christ we should have great evangelistic joy to out and proclaim the message of truth in order to complete His fullness and ours**
 - a. We should be seeking to grow and expand our ministry to complete the fullness of the body of Christ

6. The Church is not about music. It is not about having a mystical experience (i.e., a second filling of the spirit or hearing God talk). It is not about the building. The Church is not about your friends here. It is not about language or race or customs or traditions
 - The Church is for Christ
 - The Church belongs to Him
 - The Church which belongs to Christ is filled with those who are Jew and Gentile. Rich and Poor. Slave and Freeman. Dare I say Russian and American. Men and Women. Educated and Uneducated. Young and the Old
 - The Church, by design, if it truly honors God, reflects not a particular group of people, but the evidence that Jesus is at work

Do you think Jesus is only at work in the Jew?

Do you think Jesus is only at work in the Gentile?

Do you think Jesus is only at work in the Rich?

Do you think Jesus is only at work in the Poor?

Do you think Jesus is only at work in Men?

Do you think Jesus is only at work in Women?

Do you think Jesus is only at work in the Old People?

Do you think Jesus is only at work in the Young people?

Do you think Jesus is only at work in the Russians?

Do you think Jesus is only at work in the Americans?

Then you do not know Christ, the head of the Church

If you are struggling to find a Church which fits your particular desires then you need to ask yourself this question: If I only want a Church which reflects my preferences and wants, then how is it Christ's Church?

- You want to know why a Church fails? Because it cuts the head of the Church out of the work of the Church
 - When this happens, it is just a matter of time for a ministry to die

SGBC we have so many wonderful things happening in our midst

- We can boast about so many things
- We can boast about God's grace upon us in so many ways

But let us boast about this, first and foremost, our diversity is the evidence that the ruler of all the nations is ruling in our midst

- The One who has surpassing greatness, who shows superior function, and is our supreme example, The Lord Jesus Christ, and He alone is the Head of this Church

You come here for Christ and His work

- Not for me, John MacArthur, the Master's Seminary, or anything else

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