

CHRIST ALONE EXALTEDⁱ

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With explanatory notes by John Gill

Adapted to modern English with some additional notes by Richard C. Schadleⁱⁱ

SERMON 5

CHRIST'S PRE-EMINENCE

“THAT IN ALL THINGS HE MIGHT HAVE THE PRE-EMINENCE.” (COLOSSIANS 1:18)¹

THIS admirable, sweet, and comfortable apostle of the Gentiles, makes it the masterpiece of his apostleship, to court and win people to Christ: “We are the ambassadors of Christ, beseeching you, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled unto God.” (2 Corinthians 5:20) as in all the rest of his epistles, so especially in this one. Even more especially in this 1st chapter, he excels in the ability he has in these matters, in this business of convincing people to come to Christ. He observes the things that most commonly and effectively deceive people’s spirits. He speaks with a kind of carefulness to effect people’s affections; especially in what we see in the 15th verse of this chapter and similar passages. We see that the apostle deals with the things that are most likely to encourage and move the people. The world is very much taken up with beauty and completeness in a person. Oh! a person may say, just let me see a beautiful person, it does not matter at all if they are poor as long as they are beautiful. It is as though the apostle said in such a way that here in Christ is real beauty indeed. Such is the beauty of Christ, that there is no beauty like his. He says in fact that he is “The image of the invisible God;” (Colossians 1:15). That is an example of one way that he commends him. But some will say: many are as rare and beautiful as Christ; what is there about Christ that is so special? It is true that man is made after the image of God, but as we saw above, the apostle calls him “The image of the invisible God,” He is speaking in an eminent manner. This can also be seen where he expresses himself more fully, showing the rare beauty of Christ in Hebrews 1:3: “Who being the

¹ All scriptures are my own translation. I have kept to the King James version for the most part, only changing the old English words to modern English.

brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.” He is the image of God in exact life likeness as one could say. He is so like him that you cannot tell one from the other. He so has all the perfections of God, that there is nothing lacking, he perfectly expresses the brightness of his glory. But there are some who truly appreciate beauty but also insist upon lineage, from what decedents did this person come from? Did he come from a good home, is he of noble and royal blood? The blood line is of great importance, especially when royalty is involved. Well if this is important than there is no better heritage than the heritage of Christ; he is from the greatest ancestry possible. As the apostle said: “The firstborn² of every creature.” He comes from that great lineage of God Himself.

But you will say, this is true of all creatures, what is so special about Christ that makes him more important, they all come from God.

I answer; The apostle explains in what manner all the creatures are of, and in the household of God when he speaks of Moses in Hebrews 3:5: “As servants in the house;” Christ, however is a Son, not only of a royal house, but he is boron from that royal house. He is the natural Son of the Father, “This is my beloved Son;” (Matthew 3:17). He is then, of the most royal blood (as I may so say with reverence). Nor is he as it were a younger brother of this house, no, he is the first-born of the family. People consider it a great matter to marry the heir of a family; and Christ is the heir. No, more than that, he is in fact the only-begotten of this royal house, there none like him and that is a great encouragement, he is “the only-begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth,” as the apostle said in John 2:14. You can go all over the world, to the royal families but you will never find one to equal the Son of God. He in this way commends himself. But yet some may object and say: “Suppose he is of such a noble house, he may be in disgrace, he may act only as a private person having no real authority, not able to take part in matters of real importance.” This is answered by the words of the apostle where he commends Christ as the most perfect in respect to his power and authority: “All things were made by him, and for him.”³ That is, all things in the world are at his command and call; they bow unto him, they stoop before him; “At his name every knee shall bow, both of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;”⁴ everything goes through his hands.

“Yes, but it may be, will some say, he is in disgrace in court that is a black mark against him.”

I answer, No. Not only is he so great in the country, but he is as just as great in the court too. For he has the whole world under his power, and he has the great king at his

² He is the first parent, or bringer forth of every creature into being, as the word will bear to be rendered. – John Gill

³ Colossians 1:16

⁴ Philippians 2:10

side; he commands in heaven, as he does upon the earth. Everything he asks of the Father is always answered. He is never said no to; if anyone comes in search of help, to petition him, to put up a petition, he is sure to answer speedily.

But, for all this, he may be but a poor man, even though he has such great power in court and country; if he is poor, I shall live but poorly with him. If he were rich, and had an abundance of wealth, then there would be some hope, some encouragement to take such a one.

I answer, Christ is not greater in court and country, than he is rich in treasure. This you shall find in the 19th verse, "It pleased the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell." All fulness; all the treasures of wisdom are hidden in him; he has the whole world to dispose of; therefore, silver and gold are not to be compared with him.

Yes, but there is one more thing to consider; even though he has great wealth, yet he may prove a miser and close-fisted, he may keep it all to himself. If this is so then the party that has him may be poor enough, for want of contributions.

But, beloved, he is not only extremely rich in himself, he is also very liberal to distribute his treasure, to make those that are his, sharers to the uttermost of all that he has. Therefore, in chapter 2:10, (for he follows this subject all along,) the apostle tells us, not only, in verse 9, "That in him dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily," but "You are complete in him who is the head of the body." The head, you know, is not a miser: what fulness the head has, it communicates to every other part of the body: Christ is a head, and a head of fulness, the fulness of the Godhead. Now the head of the body is not stingy, it dispenses and scatters all that is in it. This is so that every member shall have a share and note, not merely to keep body and soul together, as we say, but a share to make the man complete and well. Anyone in the world could try and imagine what the perfect person would be like for themselves. No matter what they imagined it would still come short of perfection. I say, men cannot imagine anyone so perfect as to come so near the real perfections of Christ; only just as close as a shadow comes near the substance. You have a proverb, that "Bachelors' wives, and maids' children, must be rare creatures;" In other words their imagination must dream up what they can not have in reality. They can imagine what perfections they choose to please their minds. Christ shall in reality, out-strip in perfection, all these fancies, more than a substance can out-strip a shadow.

Now, the apostle, having delivered himself thus fully by way of soliciting love to Christ, he comes to finish this section in the words of our text. He there declares the end and purpose for which he sets out Christ in so many excellencies as he did; the end of this was, "That in all things he might have the pre-eminence;". That he may be taken for the most excellent thing in the world; that all things may be rejected, rather

than him; and he set above everything else in the world. So then, the point in brief is this, in regard of the rare excellencies, and perfections, and usefulness of Christ, which are incomparable, he ought to have the pre-eminence in all things. In examining these things, we shall consider,

First: What the pre-eminence is, which Christ ought to have.

Secondly: Why he should have the pre-eminence in all these; And then a word or two of application.

First: What is this pre-eminence that Christ should have. I will not insist upon the word pre-eminence: you all know, to give a person or thing the pre-eminence, is no more than this, to set up such a person or thing above all others, and especially for those uses and purposes we have occasion of them for: I say, to choose such a person before any other, as a person who can better, and more certainly bring to pass what we desire, than anyone else can. So that in brief, to give Christ the pre-eminence, is, to set up Christ above all things in the world; to choose Christ, rather than anything, for every use and purpose to make of him: I say, above and before anything whatsoever, as apprehending him infinitely more able and sufficient to such purposes than anything else is.

But more particularly, there is something we must understand if we are to clearly see what the pre-eminence that Christ ought to have is. We must understand that God has given to us an infallible pattern to use when we draw our own impressions. In general, therefore, the pre-eminence we are to give to Christ, is, the pre-eminence that the Father has given to him before us, and later revealed to us. The purpose is so that we may, in our way, give the same to glory to him. Therefore, we must consider for a while what pre-eminence is that the Father has given to Christ. You shall find, that the Father in many things infinitely sets up Christ above all things in the world: he chose Christ before all things in the world. For instance: first, the Father gives Christ the pre-eminence of his affections, his love and his delight. There, is nothing in the world, the Father loves and delights in, as he does in his Son. All the delights that the creatures receive from the Father, are but beams from the sun of righteousness, in the eyes of God. I can show from one or two passages that Christ has more of the abundance of the Father's love, than any creature in the world. Let's look at Proverbs 8:30-31. Notice first of all, that wisdom, spoken of in this chapter, is generally understood by everyone to be Christ Himself. Indeed, that which is affirmed about wisdom, can be affirmed of no one else but Christ. Among other particulars notice these two which show that it is Christ, and that he has the choicest affection of the Father. It is said of Wisdom here that "I was set up from everlasting." I was set up from everlasting: none was everlasting but the Father who set him up; none could be everlasting but the Son who was set up. All creatures had their beginning and being in

time. Now, observe the affection of the Father in this; I was set up from everlasting; this properly sets forth the nature of pre-eminence. Wisdom speaks of many things; God made the foundations of the earth, made the sea, and the different creatures; but I was set up from everlasting. It's just as if he should say, these have their place in the world, but my place is above them, in the affection of God. And, that this setting up is meant to show us that God's affection to Christ is above any creature in the world, thus can be seen by what he says in verse 30, "Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: I was daily his delight in the habitable parts of the earth; I was by him as one brought up with him;" The meaning is clear, Christ is here considered as the favorite of the Father. In a general sense, all the creatures in the world are brought into being by God. Christ, however was the one who was in the bosom of the Father. When Abraham had an Isaac, Isaac must be brought up with Abraham, and Ishmael must be sent away; Ishmael shall have a portion, but shall not be brought up with him. This shows the difference of affection of one before the other. Being brought up with him shows the greatness of the affection: "I was brought up with him, I was daily his delight;" God made the creatures, but Christ was his only delight. In other words, he could not look upon any creature in the world, delight in it with the delight he had in his Son; that delight, as it were, swallowed up the delight he had in any creature. In brief, the love and delight that the Father has to the son has such a pre-eminence, that the truth is, there is no creature in the world that actually participates in the smallest amount of the love of the Father, but only through the Son, and for the Son's sake. The Son becomes the channel, or rather the spring, that receives from the ocean of God's love. Any love that the creature participates in, it participates of it through Christ alone. You know that we often enjoy the sweet streams and running waters. When we do so we are dependent upon the spring or source of that water and what that source receives and then conveys to the ocean from that source. The heart of God, as I may so speak, is the ocean, the first (1 John 4:19) source of all love to the creature; Christ is the spring that first receives from him, and then through him all the love is diffused to the creature.

You know, that by nature we are children of wrath, subjects of the hatred and displeasure of God, being at enmity with God; how are we ever to draw near to God again? As the text says: "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself;" (2 Corinthians 5:19) So that our being united again to the Father, participation in the love of the Father comes to us though Christ: "You that sometimes were afar off, has he made near by the blood of Christ;" (Ephesians 2:13). When it says afar off, that is in respect of the affection of God, in regard of our sinful nature; but we are made near,

that is, brought again into the affection of God by the blood of Christ.^{5, 6} Here then we see the pre-eminence of Christ above all creatures, he has infinitely more of God's affection; he is the spring and fountain of all affection that the creature receives.

This per-eminence of Christ is revealed to us as the pattern to guide us in how we are to walk so that we actually walk according to his pattern. We should always make Christ our chief and choicest affection. Nothing can be placed more correctly than by following the pattern set before us by God. The more we place our affections in the way shown to us by God the more we correctly walk before God. If we put the cart before the horse, putting our affections on earthly lower things before the heavenly Godly things; the more we do such things the more we deviate from the pattern God has placed before us in Christ as God himself. How then can we give Christ the pre-eminence over all other persons? It is when he is really and truly advanced and exalted above all other creatures in our affection. "Whom have I in heaven but you?" said Asaph; "I desire nothing in the earth in comparison of you." (Psalm 73:25) True pre-eminence of affection is given to Christ when there is nothing else in the world in our affection that can compare to him. This can be seen, for example in the Song of Solomon 5:9,10 where the church discusses her beloved when the strangers ask her: "What is your beloved, more than another beloved?" she answers, "My beloved is the chief of ten thousands." Here is true pre-eminence ascribed. When the people of Israel heard David say, he would go to war, they pleaded with him with "You are worth more than ten thousand of us." (2 Samuel 18:3) Here was the pre-eminence given to the King. So, I say, when in affection Christ is promoted as the chief among ten thousands; even more, let all things in the world be compared with Christ, they are trash compared to him. When this is true, then, I say, real pre-eminence is given to Christ. It is when, in our love, we regard all the excellencies of Christ as set above everything in the world.

Secondly, The Father gives Christ this pre-eminence in a very enlarged and multiplied manner; giving him a large proportion of gifts and advantages beyond what is given to any and all creatures. Christ is the Benjamin to his Father; whose food and drink is more than five times as much as all the rest of the brethren. The apostle tells us in Philippians 2:9 that, "That God has highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name;" Again in Hebrews 1:9, he has anointed Christ, "He has anointed him

⁵ This must be understood, as the Doctor explains it, of the open participation and enjoyment of the love of God, and not of the secret love of God, and the cause and origin of it; which is his own sovereign will, and not the blood of Christ. – John Gill

⁶ As Gill explained we must be careful to understand the Doctor in this section. This is especially true of the quotation from 2 Corinthians 5:19. As Crisp correctly explains, it is through Christ and his sacrificial death that we draw near to God. In his sermons he treats his hearers as Christians, speaking to them as such for their encouragement and upbuilding. 2 Corinthians 5:19-21, and indeed the book as whole, is addressed to true believers, not to the unsaved. Sadly, in our day, those who love to do harm to the sovereignty of God apply these verses to the unsaved. – Richard Schadle

with the oil of gladness above his fellows.” We find that God has exalted Christ even above angels. Hebrews chapters one and two demonstrate this point, that in many respects God exalts Christ above angels; “To which of his angels said he at any time, you are my Son, this day have begotten you?” But, I say, when we look at the portions and gifts given to Christ, we find the God gives him far more than he gives to any creature. In John 3:34, it is said, “God gives not the Spirit by measure unto him;” What we receive is, as it were, drop by drop, we have but little while Christ has, what he has received by the Spirit, an immeasurable amount. The truth is that Christ receives that part that is needed by virtue of his being the head. The head needs to supply not only its self but the whole body. There needs to be such a proportion so as to be sufficient to supply all the parts, from the head to the foot. Therefore, it must have more than the different parts themselves; we on the other hand, need no more than for our own sustenance. Christ is our head, and therefore as our head must have the pre-eminence; that is, a larger proportion of gift's than others. Others have but to provide for themselves, but he is to maintain himself, and to maintain the whole body at the same time. Therefore, we should give Christ the pre-eminence, to which the Father has exalted him. He is exalted above creatures, having been given more than was given to any creature; in fact, all that is given to creatures is given to them through Christ. We should give him the pre-eminence that God has given him. Where should a creature go for water, but to the spring? where should the creature go for strength, but unto the fountain of strength? Is it not demeaning to Christ, that while all fullness dwells in him alone, we forsake this fountain to go to broken cisterns that will hold no water? Take notice of this fact: whenever we run to any creature in any necessity or emergency, either before or instead of going to Christ, as often as we do this, we rob Christ of that pre-eminence that God has given to him. We should always give this to Christ. If any creature in the world appeals to you as being a means of helpfulness, a means of strength, and of supply and you desire and go to that source rather than go to Christ; than you have given that creature the pre-eminence that belonged to Christ alone. You have brought Christ down and raised the creature up by your actions. Look to it, beloved, while you run to the creature, to the world, for this, and that, and the other thing, and think it must come to you in this way, or it will never come, you than totally neglect Christ. Now some of you are of a more spiritual disposition. What if, when you are in the middle of some trial, you turn for support to some grace or ability of spirit within yourself or to any qualifications, or any performances you have to offer. You turn inward in this manner looking there for something that will most likely furnish you will what you need. At the same time, you look faintly and coldly upon Christ, and the freeness of that grace that Christ brings alone with himself to provide for you. As long as you do so, you deny Christ the pre-eminence of those portions and gifts God has given to him more than to anything else. If God had given to any creatures more than he give to Christ, you might be excused for seeking help in the creature rather than in Christ; you might more properly look

and wish for them to supply your need than to Christ. Christ, however has more than any creature in the world. Even if Christ is made the sole and only fountain of supply, whether

outward man; then must he have this pre-eminence to be sought unto rather than anything in the world, for furnishing what you need, and supplying you with that, everything must come from this fountain.

Thirdly, The Father gives Christ this pre-eminence as the foundation to hold up all things. The apostle tells us, "Other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ," 1 Corinthians 3:11. Again in Hebrews 1:2 speaking of Christ we read: "As the brightness of the Father," he also says: "That he does uphold all things by the word of his power;" God then gives, to Christ the pre-eminence of being the foundation. The creature therefore robs Christ of his pre-eminence, when Christ is not allowed to be the foundation that bears up all things, but other foundations are put in his place. When we do that it's as if these false foundations were more secure than Christ himself. In Isaiah 28:16 we see what pre-eminence the Father give to Christ as the foundation; "Behold, (says he,) I lay in Sion for a foundation, stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation." The apostle Peter has something to add to this when he says in Peter 2:4, 5 "An elect, precious stone, a living stone, unto whom coming, you as lively stones are built up a spiritual house." Notice what pre-eminence he has given to Christ, that he is such a foundation able to uphold all things.

To look more into these things: first, he is a stone, the firmest foundation in the world, for the security of that which is laid upon it so that no sinking occurs. He gives Christ this pre-eminence as well. Beloved, look unto him, and consider him as a stone, an immoveable rock; such a rock as you may sit down with this confidence; that though heaven and earth shake and come together, whatsoever is laid upon him shall never totter.

He is a "tried stone," says the text; that is, more than just a stone. You know what pre-eminence those medicines have, that have *probatum est* over-written; that is an approved medicine, and, upon trial, found to be good. You know what pre-eminence that armor of proof has, when a musket is discharged upon it, and the bullet does not pierce it; this is of pre-eminence above others. Christ is "a tried stone;" there is a *probatum est* written over the head of this stone; he was tried by the Father, he is tried by believers, he is tried by his enemies; and a *probatum est* is written over his head, that he is a stone with a witness: found to be good. (Hebrews 10:14. Zechariah 4:7) He was tried by the Father, first, in his secret council. The Father found that nothing in the world could stand in the way of the work that Christ needed to do. He

was tried by him on the earth; "he made the iniquities of us all to fall on him," Isaiah 53:6, and yet they could not break his back. Here he was tried, he made him a stopping point for all his wrath, the whole quiver of his envenomed arrows; yet he stood the test and passed. He was tried by believers; they have put him to the upmost testing. He is tried by his very enemies, who find him a grindstone to grind them to powder; a bulwark of security for all such whom they oppose. He is not only a tried stone, but "a precious tried stone," as the apostle said, what is more: he gives him this pre-eminence, to be a precious stone. We also find this same example in the book of Revelation where the Holy Spirit uses precious stones to show forth the foundation, gates and walls of the Church. This shows the excellency, that they are precious stones. Here, I say, is pre-eminence, that Christ is a precious stone, as well as a tried stone. He is precious to God, nothing so delightful as what he does; precious to believers, precious in respect of beauty (no beauty like his); precious in respect of his value; nothing of worth comparable to him; "the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul, thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil," (Micah 6:7); these come nowhere close to the value of the ransom of the soul; but Christ has ransomed it, and it is raised from the grave. All the creatures in the world, gathered up together, could never be of enough value to redeem the soul: therefore, he is precious, precious in value and worth. If all the revenue of the whole world could be paid out for its value, it would be as a nothing compared to the virtue and excellency of Christ; such is the virtue that is found in Christ. Christ has the power to draw out the thorn from the foot or to draw out the very plagues within a soul. (Numbers 21:8,9 and John 3:14,15) It's true that it cost him his very life but it draws the poison out of the person who comes to him for healing. (I Corinthians 15:56) There are many precious stones, they say, that have great value, but yet none can be compared to Christ. Moreover, he is not only precious but he is also sure, as the prophet said: "a sure foundation," (Isaiah 28:16). You can place whatever load you want upon Christ's back; he will not bend or stoop. Therefore, he was excellently typified by those brazen pillars in Solomon's temple; they were made, purposely made of brass because of their strength. They were able to bear the whole weight of the temple porch. Christ has this pre-eminence given unto him from the Father, that although an infinite weight was to be placed upon him, he would be able to carry it anywhere. And in this regard, Sampson was a type of him, who; being barred up in the city among the Philistines, was able to take the gates of the city and carry them up to a mountain, and lay them there. he is so "sure a foundation", that if you lay upon him all the sins you ever committed, yes even lay upon him all the sins of all those who will be saved by him, these will not cause him to even bend under the weight. They cannot break him; he will carry them away as easily as Samson did the gates. Add to that, if you will the load of all your duties and performances, and businesses in the world; lay all that upon Christ, he will do all for you. But, must not we do them? you will ask. Yes, he will do them for you, and in you. First, he will do them for you, namely, by fulfilling righteousness in his own

person, which he presents to his Father, as that righteousness whereby believers shall be justified before the Father. As he does all *for* them, so he does all righteousness *in* them. Your duties are as the duty you do to a deceased friend. You wish as your last duty to him to carry him to his grave. The bearers, who carry the coffin on their shoulders carry all the weight while you walk underneath. You walk with ease because they bear the weight. Now all duties we have to do seem to weigh heavily upon us. We say that this is a hard saying and that is a hard saying, who can obey these things? But you must understand that the Lord Christ is such a support, such a bearer, that he takes all the weight of duties upon his own back. He not only carries the burden but carries it in such a way that it's like the friend walking with the corpse which the burden the bearers carry. In all duties God calls for of any person, the strength of Christ is made perfect in the weakness of him that is to do them. Christ not only takes the doing from men, but he takes away the heaviness and the task as well. We look upon duties as a yoke and burthen; but look at what Christ said, "Take my yoke, for it is easy; and my burden, for it is light." (Matthew 11:30) How can this be, that it should be a yoke, and yet easy; a burthen, and yet light? It is a yoke and burthen in itself, to any person that carries all himself, without Christ; but easy and light when Christ bears the weight of it. Again, add to this, He is so *sure a foundation*, that, besides duties; lay all your burdens upon him, his back is broad enough to sustain all; the burthen of your spirits, the burthen of your outward man. Not only that but add all the burthens of the church in general, while she is under the greatest calamities: Christ, I say, is *a sure foundation* to bear all these; to bear the burthen of all the cares of all the people of God; As the apostle said: "Cast your care upon him, for he cares for you," (1 Peter 5:7) Finally, he is *a sure foundation*; commit all your comforts unto Christ, he will uphold all your comforts, he will renew them and enlarge them. Besides, he is an elect stone, singled out by God himself, for this very office, in respect of his excellency and usefulness, to have the pre-eminence. And as he is elected unto it; this implies that it is God's own act that Christ should have such a pre-eminence so as to be the foundation. Besides, because this is God's own act it is certain that God himself must become exhausted, before Christ shall fail in the smallest detail of that which is imposed upon him. Look therefore at the God in heaven, as God is able to do, for all this Christ is also able to do. It is God who sends Christ about his work, so that God must fail before Christ can fail. If a father has a child, that he prizes as his own life, and that son is a slave in the galleys; will he not send a ransom to free his son from the galley? He will spend all that he has, rather than have his son not be redeemed. A wise man, in sending a servant out into the world for specific tasks would certainly supply that person with all that they needed to complete the work. It would be useless for a master to send out a servant for five pounds worth of goods but supply them with no money. Does God send Christ into the world to redeem sinners, to sustain the burthen of their sins, and not furnish him

with what is needful for the work he sends him for? He might as well have kept him at home, if he did not furnish him thoroughly, that he might complete the work.

Finally, He has such a pre-eminence, as to be a living-stone, and such a living-stone, as makes all stones living that come near unto him. Here is an example of pre-eminence Christ has; it is as that of the loadstone⁷, you observe, all iron or steel that comes near it, it draws those materials to it. It communicates, of its own virtue, so that the iron is drawn to it. This is very like Christ; Christ is such a loadstone, that he draws many after him. He draws them after him, by communicating his own virtue to them; now, as he is a living-stone, he communicates life to them, though they were dead in sin. Not only that but he communicates a power to them, to make them alive. You know we have a saying: that when a knife is touched with a loadstone, it will draw another to it as well. It is certain that Christ has this virtue to draw souls to himself, and when he draws them, they partaking of life from him, he gives unto them as instruments of life to draw others. As Christ said to Peter: “When you are converted strengthen your brethren.” (Luke 22:32) Now, seeing Christ has all this pre-eminence given unto him by the Father, to be such a foundation to bear up all things, let us give him this pre-eminence to lay all upon him, and not upon anything else whatsoever. The more we rely our all upon “this stone, this tried stone, this precious corner stone, this sure foundation, this elect corner stone, this living-stone;” the more we give him the pre-eminence. There may be a house built upon bedrock, yet the owner places buttresses against the walls. If the foundation is good and strong what purpose do the buttresses serve? They are only needed when it is apparent that the house will fall down without them. In the same way so far as you set up any props in addition to Christ the foundation, to support that which he alone should hold up, so far you disparage Christ; so far you bring him down, and take away that pre-eminence which belongs to him.

I see the time steals away. There are many particulars, wherein I should show you how you may give the pre-eminence unto Christ. But I must hasten.

Consider, briefly, Why should Christ have the pre-eminence? Why should not other things sit cheek-by-jole with him?⁸ I answer, Because it is the good will and pleasure of the Father he should have the pre-eminence. What is the reason Joseph must be the chief man in Egypt? Pharaoh will have it so. What is the reason that Mordecai must be led through the city with pomp and triumph, and Haman lead the horse, when Mordecai was counted a slave to Haman? Why, King Ahasuerus will have it so. And, if God will have it so, it must be so: if there were no other reason, but God the Father's will. We, that are subjects, should yield to the Father his own will, and give that honor

⁷ I.E. A magnet

⁸ Side by side, or in equality with him. – John Gill

to him, whom he will honor: “What shall be done to the man whom the King will honor? Thus shall you do to him, Let the royal apparel be brought which the king used to wear, and the horse that the king rides upon, and the crown-royal which is set upon his head; and let this apparel, and horse, be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man with it, whom the king delights to honor and bring him on horseback through the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king will honor,” Esther, 6:8, 9. As much as to say, Those the king honors, the people must honor with him: so, if God the Father will honor the Son with a pre-eminence upon earth, his will must be a law to us; we must honor him with that pre-eminence, because he will have it so.

Secondly, Christ must have the pre-eminence above all other things in the world, as he is born unto it; he is heir of all things. You know, it is the right of the heir to have the inheritance, or, a double portion above his brethren; Christ, therefore, being the heir of the world, the first begotten of the Father; no, the only Son; it starts with nature, he should have the pre-eminence above a younger brother.

Thirdly, Christ has bought this pre-eminence; he has paid for it to the uttermost value of it. It is fitting for him that buys a lordship, that he should be lord of the manor; It is not correct for any inferior tenant to be placed above him, as long as he has purchased and paid that correct price for it. Christ has purchased this pre-eminence, and he paid the Father the uttermost farthing; “He beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied” (Isaiah 53:11) with it; and therefore, he ought to have it.

Fourthly, Christ ought to have the pre-eminence of all things, in that he alone is able to manage this pre-eminence. You know there are many favorites in prominent places sometimes; they are entrusted with all businesses of state, doing what is the will of the prince. if they be not able to manage, and the state comes to ruin, then they will also come to a bad end. What if, instead of Christ, any other being were to be put in the place of pre-eminence, so they that being should manage all the affairs of the world. What would this prove to the world? It would prove, as the poet imagined it did by the son of Phoebus. He went about to drive the chariot of the sun: Phoebus could manage that feat perfectly; but Phaeton, a novice, a stripling, an ignorant fellow, comes in; he steps up to rule the sun, and the whole world is set on fire. I say, it would be so at least with the world, if any creature should have the pre-eminence to manage the affairs of it. Look to the wisest man in the world, and most able to manage the affairs of the world; yet he has so many irons in the fire, some of them burn for want of attending to. Christ should, therefore, have the pre-eminence, because he can so perfectly complete whatever business he undertakes.

Fifthly, Christ should have the pre-eminence in all things, because he deserves that honor from us. We usually honor those people to whom we are most indebted to;

according to the kindness we have received, so is how we exalt the person. Now, what creature in the world comes closer than Christ in loving kindness and obligation at our hands? Where would we have been, had not Christ stepped in between us and the Father to make peace with the Father for us? Oh! what a fearful account should we would have had to give at the great tribunal of the Lord, had not Christ beforehand cancelled all that God could charge us with, and blotted out our transgressions, and presented us without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing in the sight of God. "In him you live, move, and have your being;" (Acts 17:28) By him you have access to the throne of grace, through a new and living way. All you have, and all that you are, all that you hope for hereafter, comes only from this fountain, this Christ, who has purchased all the gifts of the Father for you. If any creature in the world can do these things for you, then let that creature be exalted above him. If, however, he leaves all the creatures of the world behind, and out runs them, that is a good reason why he deserves and should have all the pre-eminence. The apostle, considering the infinite worth Christ has to be exalted by men, cry's out into this vehement expression, "If any man loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed with a great curse" 1 Corinthians 6:22, see also John 21:17) on how men should treat Christ.

Now for application of this: Is it Christ's due to have the pre-eminence? Yes: then bring down everything that exalts itself above Christ. Raise up and set up the thrown-down and dejected Christ that is in you. You that have exalted the world, and made it your god, bring down, this idol, grind it to the dust, set up the Lord Christ. If you have any love for the world, let Christ know about it. When men would have anything from a king, they would never go to the floor scrubber in the kitchen; but to the favorite, by whom the king has declared he will grant all things. When the people came to Pharaoh, he sends them to Joseph, as, Joseph said, he would do the Pharaoh's will. I say to you, would you have anything from God, go to Christ, go by Christ to him. If you come in any other name in the world, if God answers you in that you ask of him, he will only answer you with a curse; "This is my beloved Son, hear him;" (Luke 9:35). Christ will guide you and speed you on your way. If Christ says, your sins are forgiven, they shall be forgiven; if Christ makes a deed of gift to you; of liberty from bondage, of grace, or of glory; once Christ has signed the deed the Father will underwrite to it and subscribe it: "If the Son make you free, then are you free indeed:" (John 8:36) for "of his fulness we do receive grace for grace." (John 1:16). In John 17:2, it is said, "The Father has given to him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life." If you wish to have these things, go to Christ; if you go anywhere else in the world, but to Christ, you will go without; they are to be had nowhere else. God has given him the pre-eminence; he must rule everything, he must determine, and the Father will yield; "The Father has given all judgment to the Son, and he himself will judge no man." (John 5:22) "The government is laid upon his shoulders:" (Isaiah 9:6) therefore you must go where God sends you, if you will receive anything from him.

Learn of Christ more, let Christ be the Alpha and Omega; in all things, begin in Christ, end in Christ; do all by Christ, get all by Christ.

But must not we serve in duty, will you say? I answer, that you must serve by duty and obedience, but do not expect that that duty merits anything. It is Christ that brings everything you get; you get nothing at all by what you do. Be assured when you look to your works you will get a knock on the head because so much of your works are sinful by the way you perform them. If you will have any good, you must get it by way of Christ. Part of your duty, as you walk in the world is to be profitable to men. However, as for benefiting yourselves by you labor and your duties, be assured you provoke God, as much as lies in you, to punish you for such presumption, if not for anything else then for the filthiness of the things you perform. And as you must bring everything down that exalts itself above Christ; so, you must set Christ above everything. Know, this will be “the great condemnation, that light,” that is Christ, “is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light.” (John 1:5 etc.) They love to run after other things, and to forsake the light; therefore, this will be their condemnation. So far as Christ is slighted, and other things promoted above him, so far you take away the great end for which Christ was sent into the world, which was, “That he might have the pre-eminence in all things.”

ⁱ Why Tobias Crisp and “Christ Alone Exalted”. If the reader does not already know it, it may surprise him or her to learn the Crisp was a member of the Established Church of England. In other words, he was an Anglican. Even a very casual reading of James Wells sermons reveals that he had great disdain for the Established Church. Equally obvious, if not more obvious is the fact that he also believed that there were good and true Christians within that community. Crisp died in 1643. It was not until 1644 that the Particular Baptists, which then consisted of seven churches, published their first confession of faith. It is impossible to say if Crisp would have ever become a Baptist. I personally think that very unlikely. God is Sovereign, He is free to use any and all means and people to give glory to Himself. One has only to think of that great child of God, William Huntington, who Wells thought very highly of. Huntington was a paedo-Baptist independent preacher. I believed that he allowed baptism in the form of immersion, but the point here is that he is another, among a huge number, who were mightily used of God, yet were not strict Baptists. Wells, and myself as well, was very careful to distance himself from John Calvin. As I stated in the about page of the Surrey Tabernacle Webpage no man, including James Wells is 100% perfect and correct in everything. The church as a whole and myself in particular have benefited immeasurably by John Calvin and a host of non-Baptists. We must however view them as humble servants whom God chose to use for his own glory. Coming back to Tobias Crisp. I would place him, like King David’s mighty warriors, at the very top of the list for adherence to the truth as it is in Jesus. One sermon, among many, that shows the close allegiance in what James Wells preached to what Crisp also taught is titled “The Family Sacrifice”. It was first preached in 1838 and republished in 1860 as sermon number 84 in volume 2 of James Wells sermons. It can be found at this location: [The Family Sacrifice](#)

ⁱⁱ Tobias Crisp lived from 1600 to 1643 and his sermons were first published in 1643 the year of his death. The edition this translation is based on was published in 1690. In their unedited form these sermons are difficult for anyone not versed in old English to understand, thus limiting their usefulness. I have attempted to keep as much of his original words as possible but at the same time to make this sermon come alive for the modern reader. My edition is entirely my own work and is presented without apology or any form of copyright. The sermons are available on the internet in their original unedited form for no cost. My edition is based on that of John Gill. An ‘as originally published’ version can be found at: <http://crispchristaloneexalted.com>. Please add “This version by Richard C. Schadle” when quoting from this version.