

All Things Were Created Through Him and for Him

by John Piper

John Piper's sermon emphasizes the sovereignty of Christ in creation and the purpose of all things existing for His glory amidst suffering and challenges.

Duration: 44:41

Scripture: Romans 8:38-39, Ephesians 6:12, Colossians 1:16, Colossians 2:15, Colossians 3:3

Topics: "Christ's Sovereignty", "Salvation Assurance"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the role of Christ in creation, highlighting how all things were created by Him and for Him, including rulers and authorities, to magnify His glory. The speaker urges the audience to trust in Christ for salvation, emphasizing the invincibility of their salvation and the assurance of being hidden with Christ in God. The message encourages believers to live boldly for Christ in a world filled with deception and challenges, knowing that nothing can separate them from God's love.

Transcript

Let's pray together. Father, I ask for your help now as we come from the praises of your name to the preaching of your Word. And I ask that it would have its powerful effect in our lives, that you would make us strong in our witness, loving and humble and broken and courageous in our service of our fellow man, and effective in the way we magnify your Son, Jesus Christ.

So, Father, don't leave me to myself or any of us sitting here to our own resources, but by your Spirit, grant me to be faithful to your Word, grant us to feel affections that correspond to the worth of Christ, and grant that a work would be done in our hearts and in our minds and in our lives that would make a difference for Christ and His glory in this city and around the world. I pray that the ripple effect of our gathering this morning would be beyond what any of us can imagine in terms of decades till Jesus comes, in terms of miles to the other side of the globe, in terms of debts of reconciliation and healing and good that will be done in marriages and parents and single people and old people and young people. Take this little five-loaf message and multiply its effect to feed thousands, I pray.

Magnify yourself in this moment of our service. Bring us to the end of this message, ready to lay down our lives for Christ and serve Him in one of these 55 ways that are highlighted in this building here, or others. I

ask you for your help now in Jesus' name.

Amen. This is the first in a series of messages, seven of them, Lord willing, under the title Spectacular Sins and Their Global Purpose in the Glory of Christ. So, God willing, we'll be on this theme till September 23.

So let me tell you where it's coming from, the impulses that have fed into this topic. There are four impulses that came together in my thinking and praying that brought me to this seven-part message. Number one, sitting on a porch in Asheville, North Carolina, end of July, reading 2 Chronicles with many of you who are reading through the Bible on the Bible reading plan that some of us are on.

Now, once a year, I read 2 Chronicles. And every time I do, I get hit between the eyes by the amazing truth that story after story describes fateful, sinful behaviors of kings, which are under the control of God Almighty for His good purposes. For example, Jeroboam rejected the wisdom of the old men.

Remember that? And he said, my father disciplined you with whips. I will discipline you with scorpions. He said that to his own people.

And then the writer, the inspired writer says, the king did not listen to the people, for it was a turn of affairs brought about by God that the Lord might fulfill His word. So he didn't listen to the good advice of the old men because God didn't let him. King Ahab, enticed by false prophets to go up and fight against the Syrians, was a stupid move.

Then Micaiah, the true prophet, comes and says this, Now therefore behold, the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of these, your prophets. The Lord has declared disaster concerning you. Third example, Joash, the king of Israel, gave wise counsel to Amaziah, king of Judah.

Do not go out to battle against your own people, Israel. Amaziah refused to listen to the good counsel. And the inspired writer says, But Amaziah would not listen, for it was of God in order that He might give them into the hands of their enemies, because they had sought the gods of Edom.

So once a year I sit on porches and I read 2 Chronicles and get hammered between my eyes with this amazing God who somehow, inscrutably, unfathomably governs the sinful acts of His kings without Himself sinning or doing anything unholy or unwise. That's the first impulse that feeds into this message. You sit there and you read that year after year and you say, why do you want us to know this? This is just trouble.

This is just a problem. Why is this in your Bible? Why don't you just conceal this and just tell us easy things? That's impulse number one. Number two, whether it's July on a porch or any other month of the year, calamity fills the news, both at home and around the world.

Newark, New Jersey. Since 1998, a 50% increase in murder rate. And last week, an execution-style murder of four teenagers on their way to college.

Utah. I looked this morning to see if there was any breakthrough. I don't think so yet.

Six minors, 1,800 feet underground. No word from them. Every effort being expended.

Praise God. May they be found alive. May we celebrate as a nation, but maybe not.

Heartland, Minnesota. 35 W Bridge. And day by day, we taste the fuller extent of its painful effects.

And then, because we are so insular as a people and are so consumed with our own news, has anybody even read that 20 million people have been displaced from their homes in Bangladesh, northern India, and Nepal, and dozens have been swept away, most of them little children, in the last two weeks. So, whether it's July on a porch or whether it's reading 2 Chronicles or whichever, across the world and across our nation, there is suffering. And I have to ask, does that have anything to do with Jesus Christ, who said, all authority in heaven and on earth is mine? Third impulse.

The Bible says that in the last days, times are going to be very difficult. Let me read that to you. 2 Timothy 3.1 Understand this, that in the last days, there will come times of difficulty.

The word is unusual. It is severity. Severe times will come before Jesus returns.

For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness. How could he say that after that list? Having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Now, I can't see my role as a pastor in such days as entertaining you.

I simply can't do it. I can't think of my role in such times as trying to help you have a superficial cheerfulness so that you just like to come to church. It's a little bit of a relief from the severity of the times.

That cannot be my goal. Not if I care. Rather, as I understand my job, my calling in this church as the main preacher is to put ballast, the ballast of truth, the ballast of weighty, glorious doctrine in the belly of your little boat so that as you try to navigate these strange days and these kinds of winds batter your life, you won't capsize, but rather you will make it all the way to the harbor called heaven with your faith intact and your joy overflowing.

That's my job. Ballast in your boat. Others can decorate the decks.

I don't have time to do it all. But I do hope the decks are clear and the sun shines on us from time to time. Those are easy days.

I'm here to help the ballast keep the boat from tipping in the hard days, taking on too much water so that it goes down. That's impulse number three. Here's impulse number four.

It's the one we're going to focus on from Colossians 1. The glory of Jesus Christ. In the last two weeks, I have spent a lot of time, last part of vacation, first week back, writing a paper, it's about 18 pages now, on a vision for Bethlehem for the next eight years. I'll meet on Wednesday with the lead team and lay it before them.

One of the things I have done to think through what God might call us to for the next eight years as a church, three campuses now, more, God willing, is to go back over the last 27 years. I went into my 28th year here in July. And amazingly, it's so embarrassing sometimes, you can listen to me preach 27 years ago.

And I went to my first candidating sermon January 27, 1980, and I listened to an excerpt at DesiringGod.org because I remembered the text. And I wanted to see, what did I say about it? Because it

has to do with the glory of Christ. The text was Philippians 1, verses 20 following, My eager expectation and hope.

This is what I was laying before 300 people, most of whom are in heaven today. It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not at all be ashamed, but that now, as always, Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. And I thought to myself as I'm writing this paper, nothing has changed in my heart about that.

Nothing has changed. It is my eager expectation at 61, not 34, that now, as always, I might never be ashamed of the Bible, but cherish this book, love to preach this book, and if by any means, Christ might be magnified in this church and in my life, whether by life or by death in the severest of times. Nothing has changed.

So the fourth impulse remains after 27 years. How shall we so minister? How shall we so love? How shall we so witness? How shall we so do 55 ministries such that Jesus Christ is magnified, made to look glorious in these twin cities and beyond. So that's the fourth impulse.

And now I want us to turn to Colossians chapter 1 for the first message in the seven-part series. How is it that Christ can be magnified in the Second Chronicles world, in Newark, in Utah, in Bangladesh, in Minneapolis, in the fall of Satan from his first perfect position, from the fall of Adam and the whole human race coming down, in the Tower of Babel and the fracturing of all of the languages in humanity, the sale of Joseph into slavery in Egypt, the treason of God's people asking for a king to be like the nations when God is their king, and finally, the betrayal of Judas. These spectacular sins, all of which serve the glory of Jesus Christ.

How can that be? That's where we're going. God has not answered all the questions that we have about sin and misery in the world. Deuteronomy 29.29 says, The secret things belong to the Lord.

There are secrets that you will not know. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13, Now we see in a mirror dimly, then face to face. Now we know in part.

Then we shall know fully even as we are fully known. You sit there and you are only looking in a mirror. What I am speaking to you is like child babbling compared to what you will know someday concerning Jesus Christ.

And yet, God has not been silent. 2 Chronicles is in the Bible. Colossians is in the Bible.

And He means for us to know these things and love these things and live by these things and not tip over in this troubled world when the waves batter our lives. Colossians chapter 1, if you're there with the Bible, you can see it with me. He begins to pray for the church in verse 9. I hope you all memorize Bible prayers so that you don't just pray your own worn, rut prayers, which is what I do if I don't use the Bible to pray.

I fall into ruts again and again and again. Say the same thing over and over again with a mindless chatter. But if I start taking Bible prayers on my lips, then I feel myself caught up into God's purposes for the church and the world, and you will too.

So He begins to pray for them. He prays that they would be filled. You see this? Verse 9, 10.

They would be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work, increasing in the knowledge of God. And when He's done praying that they would increase in the knowledge of God and lead lives that are Christ-exalting and people-loving, then He begins to extol Jesus. And that's what we've been doing all morning.

And He does it in 15 statements. And I'm just going to read them to you and number them, and I'll number them so that they'll mount up like they do for me when I write them down. Number 1, verse 14.

Number 1, In Him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Number 2, verse 15, He is the image of the invisible God. Number 3, He is the firstborn of all creation.

Number 4, By Him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. We'll come back to that. Number 5, All things were created through Him.

Number 6, All things were created for Him. Number 7, He is before all things. Number 8, In Him all things hold together.

9, He is the head of the body, the church. 10, He is the beginning. 11, He is the firstborn from the dead.

12, In everything He is preeminent. 13, Verse 19, In Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. 14, Verse 20, He reconciles all things to Himself whether on earth or in heaven.

And 15, He makes peace by the blood of His cross. This is probably the most dense, concentrated, acclamation of the Son of God in all the Bible. And I commend you to memorize it.

I do. If that's one takeaway from today's message, it would be verses 14 to 20 of Colossians. Memorize it so that if any person or any power or any wisdom or any love awakens your admiration or your amazement or your joy, let it be the greatest person and the greatest wisdom and the greatest love and the greatest power, Jesus Christ.

Everybody on this parking lot is moved at some time or other to be admiring or amazed about somebody or something. You all have capacities for amazement and admiration and love. And I just want to plead with you, memorize those 15 things about Jesus so that your heart will rise with affections for Him that correspond in some measure to the worth that He has.

Jesus is our treasure. We naturally get amazed at television or movies or bridge collapses or great natural phenomena. We do not by nature feel amazement at the most amazing reality in the universe which was just described to you.

That means we have to pray. We have to meditate. We have to deny ourselves.

We have to plead for new hearts. For our purposes, we're focusing on verse 16. By Him, by Jesus Christ, all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.

All things were created through Him and for Him. Jesus made the world. Jesus made everything.

They were created through Him because He was in the beginning with God. And He was God. And all things were made through Him and without Him was not anything made that was made.

He is God and thus He created. He's with God the Father and they came through Him. And most amazingly perhaps of all, everything exists for Him.

From the bottom of the oceans to the top of the mountains, everything exists for Jesus. Nothing in the universe exists for itself. You exist to make Christ look great.

So does that sky. So do the trees. Everything exists for Christ.

Not that He needs it, but that it displays His glory. From the most boring school subject to the most fascinating science. From the smallest particle to the biggest star.

From the ugliest cockroach in a cave to the most beautiful human being. From the greatest saint to the most wicked genocidal dictator. Everything exists and will serve the glory of Jesus Christ whether they know it or not.

Every knee will bow and acknowledge that Jesus is Lord. All things... Now just think of this now. Get this.

Of the millions of things that Paul could have paused to mention specifically, what did he pause to mention in verse 16? What does he choose to mention? Sky? Human eyeball with its amazing wonders? Animals? Seas? Mountains? What did he choose? Of all the things he could choose to say, these Christ made and these exist for Christ. Answer. Thrones.

Dominions. Powers. Rulers.

Authorities. What's that? Paul knows what he's doing here. Paul knows what he's going to say in chapter 2 verse 15.

You might want to look at it. Those last two things, rulers and authorities, they pop up throughout Paul's letters. Who are they? What are they? They are supernatural, demonic powers that long to deceive and destroy this world.

Chapter 2 verse 15. Jesus disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to an open shame by triumphing over them in Him. You all know, many of you do anyway, what He said about them in Ephesians chapter 6. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers, against authorities, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places, against the powers of darkness made by Him and for Him.

Where do they come from? By Him. All things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. And why do they exist? All things were created through Him and for Him.

Be careful. It does not say He made them evil. He just made them.

The little book of Jude gives us a clue and we'll be here next week, Lord willing, on the fall of Satan. The little book of Jude gives a little clue with its reference to angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling. Now Paul knows that.

He knows that these rulers and authorities that Jesus Christ nullified at the cross fell. And he knows something else that we're going to see in the next few weeks that has greater implications. He knows that Jesus Christ knew before they fell that they would fall.

And knowing what would become of these angels in their demonic reality, knowing full well all that they would be and do, He planned redemptive history with that in view such that they would totally serve His glorious saving purposes to magnify His power and to magnify His grace. So I'm left this morning with this question. Why does Paul tell us this? Why does he not just say God the Christ created all things created all things for His glory.

Leave it at that. Why does he go out of his way to bring up the fact that He made rulers and authorities and powers and then tell us who they were in chapter 2. They are the evil ones that Jesus nullified by His cross so that they could not destroy His people. They can hurt us.

They cannot destroy us because our sins are forgiven and Jesus' righteousness is imputed to us. Why does he tell us these things? And that's what this series is about. Why does he think it's good for us? I don't think there's a line in this Bible that is not good for us because I believe God loves me and calls me to believe every word of it, calls me to meditate on it day and night, and tells me that if I do, if I don't leave anything out, I will be like a tree planted by streams of water that brings forth its fruit in its season.

In everything He does, He prospers. If that's true, then He loves me with this book and every line of it should be preached, believed, and honored. So for seven weeks, we're just going to try to understand why God would tell us these things.

And I close by answering that question from Colossians this morning in five brief statements. So here we are on our way to the conclusion. Why does Paul go out of his way not to speak generically about the creation by Christ of all things and that all things serve Him, but rather highlight rulers and authorities which are evil? Answer number one, because it's objectively true and nobody's subjective opinion.

There are many people that you rub shoulders with every day who do not believe in objective truth. What's true for you is true for you. And what's true for me is true for me.

This book stands as a bulwark against that way of understanding reality. It has a meaning, and the meaning never changes. Our understandings may change.

Our applications may change. What God intended when it was written never changes. There is such a thing as objective reality, and the first reason why Paul tells us things is to bring us into awareness of reality.

Number one. Number two. These truths make clear that Christ is the only being worthy of your worship.

The reason I highlight that is because behind this church of Colossae there were false teachers. What they were saying, according to chapter 2, verse 18, is that we should all make our way through a gradation up to the living God by worshiping angels. He said, Do not let anyone deceive you calling for the worship of angels.

That's why he wrote verse 16 the way he did. Do not worship angels. Worship the one who made the angels.

That's the point of verse 16 over against the false teaching behind this book. Number three. He is very concerned, and it is so modern and so relevant, that the church in Colossae not be captivated by high-sounding heresies.

Listen to verse 8 of chapter 2. See to it that no one take you captive by philosophy or empty deceit according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. If Paul were here today, if he just landed here and didn't know anything about the 21st century, one of the things he'd say is, Don't be deceived. You must be getting near the end.

Deceivers will be everywhere. Man-centered teachings will abound. Religious ways will multiply.

You will turn here, and there will be this odd new book. And you'll turn here in an odd new movie. Everywhere you turn, there'll be a beckoning after your mind and your soul.

And he said, I wrote Colossians so that 2100 years later you would not be taken captive by philosophies or traditions. What traditions? It's all right. I'm almost done.

That's number 3. Number 4. These are reasons why Paul spoke the way he spoke. He wanted it to be crystal clear that when we poor, fragile, weak, frightened, vulnerable human beings, and I'm not making that up. I don't know why I'm wired the way I'm wired, but I get afraid.

I look bold in the pulpit. I know that. Don't be deceived.

I'm just a little Johnny from Wadehampton High School who has many of the same old junk that I have to deal with morning after morning. So I have some measure of empathy with just simple, ordinary, run-of-the-mill, first-grade Christians who feel like they're just overwhelmed with opposition. Stuff in their life that they wonder, can I even deal with it? Can I make it? And surely what Paul was doing in verse 16 of Colossians 1 was drawing attention to the fact that, okay, you've got enemies.

You've got problems. Let me take the worst ones. Let me take the principalities and the powers and the rulers and the authorities and tell you about them.

Jesus made them. They exist for Jesus. Jesus died to put them to naught.

If your worst enemy is taken care of, go sweat the others. I think he wanted to say to the simplest person out there who has a hard time being a Christian and wonders, can you make it in these sophisticated twin cities where so many false things are said about God? I'm tempted here to go off on a tangent about the multi-faith service that was held, which I attended after the bridge collapsed, but I will not. Number five, and I'm done.

Paul wants you to know that your salvation is invincible. He wants you to know that when you're saved and you're in Christ by faith alone, you're there to stay. Nothing can separate you from the love of God in Jesus Christ.

So let me read, first of all, I'm going to read a closing verse. I'm going to ask a question just practically. I want to make sure that I ask it of you.

Whether you're on the grass, on the chair, standing on the wall, have you trusted this great Christ who created the world, designed the world to magnify His glory so that those who trust in Him could have His joy forever, the One who died for our sins, who lived a perfect life so that in Him we would be swallowed up in His perfection? Have you trusted Him? Have you turned away from reliance upon yourself or tradition or being a Baptist or a Catholic or Methodist or Presbyterian or whatever, Christian home, baptized? Those are not saving realities. Trusting Christ as our sin forgiver and our perfection provider is

the only way Have you trusted Him? And if you have, I want to read you a word from Colossians owing to what we've seen that is true about you so that as we close with a song you'll be able to sing it with all your heart. This is Colossians 3, verse 3. You have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

When Christ, who is your life, appears, you will appear with Him in glory. There's no if, and, or buts. If He has destroyed the one whose design is to deceive you and kill you and destroy you, then nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ.

Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all the world will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. All things were created by Jesus Christ, even your worst enemy. It is not Christ, but they who were shamed at the cross.

According to Colossians 2.15 In the end, everything serves to magnify the glory of Jesus Christ. Let's pray. Almighty God and heavenly Father, I praise you for Christ who loved us from the depths of the sea to the creation of all things, from the highest of heights, creation revealing your majesty, from the colors of fall to the fragrance of spring, every creature unique in the song that it sings, all exclaiming indescribable, uncontainable.

You place the stars in the sky and you know them by name. You are amazing God, all powerful, untamable, awestruck we fall to our knees and we humbly proclaim who has told every lightning bolt where it should go or seen heavenly storehouses laden with snow, who imagined the sun and gives source to its light yet conceals it and brings us the coolness of light, who created the rulers and powers on high then permitted their fall and their sway in the earth until you in the fullness of time came to die and in triumph to show forth your infinite worth, indescribable, uncontainable. Save the perishing.

Strengthen the saints. Make us contrite. Send us to those 55 booths with a passion.

I will not waste my life. I will not sit in my house watching clean videos night after night after night after night after night. I will lay my life down in this city for those who know so little of this great glorious Christ.

So Lord as we lift our voices and sing this song indescribable not just to God in general but to you Jesus, fill us with a passion for your supremacy and all things for the joy of this city. Come and help us to worship and help us to live as we ought.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/dlwOzt84xAg.mp4>

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