

# The Person of Christ

by David Gooding

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*David Gooding's sermon explores the essential authority of Jesus Christ over all aspects of life and the church, urging believers to recognize and submit to His lordship.*

**Duration:** 34:00

**Scripture:** Matthew 28:18, Ephesians 1:19, 2 Timothy 3:16

**Topics:** "Person Of Christ", "Christian Living", "Authority of Christ"

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## Description

David Gooding emphasizes the authority of Jesus Christ in his sermon 'The Person of Christ', addressing the challenges faced by the evangelical church in a culture that often rejects absolute truths. He argues that the authority of Christ is essential for the church's power and purpose, and that believers must recognize His lordship over their lives, time, money, doctrine, morals, and future. Gooding warns against the dangers of tradition and intellectualism that can undermine Christ's authority, urging Christians to submit fully to His will. He concludes by calling for a generation of believers who will boldly uphold the authority of Christ in a world that seeks to compromise it.

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## Transcript

One of the great indictments made against the evangelical church in our generation is that we are far too dogmatic. We believe that we are right and therefore everybody else is wrong. There's only one way and we proudly claim that we are on it.

Of course, in this age of compromise and sophistication, such a definite and simple position is becoming increasingly unpopular. And I wonder if some of you tonight are feeling the pressure of maintaining the position in the 20th century that this book is the word of God. I wonder if some of you young people at school are feeling the pressure of maintaining that Jesus Christ is the only saviour.

The pressure of the irreconcilable points of view which David was speaking about. Have you been tempted just to give way, maybe just an inch or two, on these issues? Of course, you'll have the very greatest difficulty giving way on such issues without destroying your Christian stand completely. For Christianity is an authority's faith.

We know the awesome authority which this book claims for itself. 2nd Timothy 3 and verse 16, it's familiar to us all. All scripture is given by inspiration of God.

We know the Christian church is seen in the Bible as an authoritative structure. Teaching an authoritative message from God. Taking an authoritative stand on moral and doctrinal issues.

And with an authoritative structure within. The New Testament picture is of elders who rule in the house of God. And they seek to ensure that the body of Christ lives within a framework which has been clearly laid down by God.

Where there is a breach of discipline, the New Testament clearly teaches that authoritative loving action must be taken. At the centre of Christianity stands a man of authority. The man, Jesus Christ.

This world is in the mess which it's in today. Because in the main, the people of our day have rejected the authority of this man. Scattered around the world and most probably within this meeting, there are people whose lives are in turmoil.

And the simple reason why that is so, is that we have rejected the authority of Jesus Christ over our lives. All over this country there are churches lacking in power, not all thank God, but many, lacking in power, lacking in real purpose. And why? Because many have obviously and publicly denied the authority of Jesus Christ over their beliefs and over their practices.

Many who have not publicly denied it, say a mere lip service to the authority of the Lord Jesus over his church. I want you to consider with me then, four simple points concerning the authority of Christ. First of all, it was an authority which was given to Christ by God the Father.

At his baptism, we see Jesus submitting to baptism by John. A baptism of repentance for the remission of sin. And he seems to the watching public to be a man like everyone else.

A sinner after all. He needs to be baptized just like everyone else. But there he is just coming up out of the water when the Holy Spirit descends upon him as a dove.

And a voice, a divine voice from glory speaks. It's a voice of authentication. This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

And we know that this was underlined on the Mount of Transfiguration. Similar words were spoken by the divine voice from glory. But this time there was an important addition.

This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear him. In other words, God is saying, this is the one you must listen to.

You're waiting for a word. You're waiting for an answer to your question. You're seeking solutions to your problem.

You've been consulting the philosophers. You've been talking and you've been asking about final authority. Well here's your answer.

An answer from heaven. An answer from God. Listen to this man.

The authority given by God the Father. Secondly, as David clearly showed us, it was an authority which Jesus claimed for himself. We recognize this authority in his teaching.

The great I am claims of the Gospel of John are a wonderful example. Speaking about truth, what does Jesus say? Does he say with all the other great teachers of every generation, this is truth as I perceive it. Follow that and you will find life.

Is that what Jesus says about truth? No, he says I am the truth. Follow me. David reminded us of his direct claim to divinity.

He reminded us of how Jesus commanded people to follow him. To be willing to lay down their lives for him. He made that amazing declaration that at the end of the age he would return to judge the world.

The authority given by God was claimed by Jesus the Son. Thirdly, it was an authority recognized by other people. The people of our Lord's day were quite used to the idea of an itinerant teacher.

It was quite a regular occurrence in their village or their town for such a man to come to teach them. But as they listened to this man from Nazareth, they recognized immediately something different, something unique. We know the famous words of Matthew 7 where we told that the crowd were astonished at the teaching of this man.

For he taught them as one who had authority unlike their scribe. Fourthly, it was an authority recognized by demons. When they saw him coming towards them, they cried out.

Why have you come to disturb us before the time? We know who you are. The Holy One of God. The demons knew Jesus Christ and they could not stand before him.

They were afraid of him. They were afraid of his authority. So don't be confused by the idea of a gentle Jesus, meek and mild.

Meekness is not softness. It's not spinelessness. Meekness is true strength.

Jesus was and is today a man of awesome authority. Let us now consider the three great realms over which Jesus claims authority. First of all the Bible says that he has authority in heaven and throughout the universe.

We know the famous declaration of Matthew 28. Just before his ascension Jesus turns to his disciples and he says all authority in heaven and on the earth is given to me. We saw Paul elaborating that thought in our reading in Ephesians 1. Where he speaks of Christ sitting at God's right hand above every name that is named.

All things have been placed under his feet. He is head over all things for the church. The hymn writer says the highest place that heaven affords is his by sovereign right.

Our savior is the Lord of glory. He has defeated all his enemies. The devil is no longer in control.

He has been cast out. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who is reigning and ruling at this present hour. Our response to this can only be worship.

As we contemplate the position of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we consider his majesty and power. Yet the fact that he still loves us.

He still has time for each one of us as individuals. Time to represent each one of us before the throne of God. We can only fall down in worship and thanksgiving for his condescension.

Jesus is Lord of heaven. Ephesians 1 and verse 19. We're breaking into the middle of the paragraph here where Paul is speaking of the surpassing greatness of God's power towards us who believe.

These are in accordance with the working of the strength of his might which he brought about in Christ when he raised him from the dead. And seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things in subjection under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church which is his body.

The fullness of him who fills all in all. A little phrase in Colossians chapter 1 and verse 17 expresses his authority in the universe. Paul simply says this.

In him in Christ all things consist. Another translation is in him all things are held together. Now if we're honest with ourselves it doesn't always appear that way does it? Sometimes as we watch the television news or we read our daily newspaper we ask ourselves is anyone in control? Maybe right now as you sit in this meeting and you look back on this day and on this week certain things have happened in your life and if you're honest you're really asking is anyone in control of my life? Well Paul said in Christ all things are being held together.

The story is told of a young woman who took her two children to Heathrow airport and standing on one of the observation towers one young child looked at the crowded sky and saw the many aeroplanes seemingly to his young eyes traveling at amazing speed. Turning to his mother he said mommy there's going to be a crash soon. Mommy said yes son it looks to be chaotic.

It looks as though no one's in control but just along the road there there's a man in a control tower and he's got his hands on switches and buttons and he's speaking into a microphone and he's holding the whole sky together. Seeming chaos is being held together in his hands. In him all things consist.

It may appear to be a chaos but Jesus has his hands on the reins of the universe and on the reins of your life. Never even for a moment does he allow those reins to slip of his grasp. Josiah Cumber wrote the Lord is King.

Lift up your voice the world and all you peoples sing from world to world the joy shall ring the Lord Omnipotent is King. Are you living in the light of that fact? This confidence and assurance fill your soul this evening. For if Christians should be anything they should be confident.

They should be bold. They should be absolutely sure because our Lord who is Lord of glory is also Lord of the universes. One stage in his life Martin Luther was passing through a period of severe depression.

He came down for breakfast one morning and found his wife dressed completely in black. Rather concerned he turned to her and he said who has died? And she quietly said God. Luther climbing into one of the rages which he was prone to climb into laid into his life and said how can you say such blasphemous things? God is sovereign, Lord of all life, Lord of the world.

How can you speak so blasphemously and tell me he is dead? Well said his rather quiet wife. Why are you living in the way in which you're living? If your God is King, if he rules over all, why are you in this fit of

depression? Have you ever asked yourself as you live in your avenue or street and people look at your life what will they conclude? Will they conclude by looking at you that God is dead or that Jesus is Lord. Jesus Christ the man of authority, the Lord of heaven, the Lord of the universes.

The second realm over which Jesus claims authority is his church. We read in Ephesians 1 verse 22 that God has made Jesus head over all things for the church which is his body. In Colossians chapter 1 and verse 18 we're told that it's God's will that in everything the Lord Jesus Christ should be preeminent.

And those words were written in the particular context of the church. That is God's will. God's will for this assembly and for every other assembly or church represented here tonight.

It's God's will that Jesus should be preeminent in your fellowship. Is that reality in the Christian world today? A. W. Toter wrote a now famous article entitled the waning authority of Christ in the churches. Let me just quote one section from it.

The present position of Christ in the gospel churches can be likened to that of a king in a limited constitutional monarchy. The king sometimes depersonalized by the term the crown is in such a country little more than a traditional rallying point. A present symbol of unity and loyalty much like a flag or a national anthem.

He is lauded, feted and supported but his real authority is small. In today's churches, writes Toter, Christ is now in fact little more than a beloved symbol. All hail the power of Jesus' name is the church's national anthem.

The cross is her official flag. But in the week by week services of the assembly and the day by day conduct of her members, someone else, not Christ, is making the decision. Strong, strong words.

Are they true? Toter challenges us for example to look at the business meetings of our churches. Whether it's the elders meeting or the Sunday school teachers meeting or the young people's fellowship committee. What are the questions we ask as we plan the future program of our assemblies? Is it now what would be different? Is it what do the people want? Is it how can we get people in? Now those questions are not wrong.

They may well need to be asked. But the fundamental question and attitude of our hearts must always be, O Christ, O living Savior, what do you want from me? What do you want from my assembly? Do you wait upon God at such times, seeking for his will? Or do you have a short word of prayer or even a short season of prayer and ask God to bless the plans that you have made? Well if the authority of Christ is waning in his churches, there are probably two causes. The first is the awesome power of tradition.

Not Christ, but custom is Lord. How we need the gift of discernment in our generation. God is doing so many new things in our day.

But the devil is producing so many seemingly genuine counterfeits. We need the grace to be willing to change. But the wisdom to know whether the Lord of the church is demanding that change, or the spirit of our age.

Never forget the power of tradition. It almost delayed the taking of the gospel to the Gentiles. Remember Peter on the roof top at Joppa.

The power of tradition almost persuaded Peter not to obey the living Christ and take the gospel to the Gentiles. The second cause, if the authority of Christ is waning in his churches, is I suggest the revival of intellectualism amongst evangelical believers. Or more accurately, the desire for the reputation of being learned.

As I was suggesting at the beginning of this message, the modern emphasis today is against a simple belief. This is the age of sophistication. The age of complication.

Let me quote from another writer. Our evangelical faith is being attacked these days from many different directions. In the western world the enemy has forsworn violence.

He comes against us no more with sword and faggot. He now comes smiling, bearing gifts. He raises his eyes to heaven and swears that he too believes in the faith of our fathers.

But his real purpose is to destroy that faith or at least to modify it to such an extent that it is no longer the supernatural thing it once was. He comes in the name of philosophy or psychology or anthropology and with sweet reasonableness urges us to rethink our historic position to be less rigid, more tolerant, more broadly understanding. Now God wants us to use our minds.

I'm glad that being an evangelical no longer is acquainted in our generation with being simplistic. But let us always remember Jesus is Lord of his church. Not reason, not science, not learning, not tradition, not custom.

Jesus is Lord. And all the beliefs and all the practices in our assemblies must be brought under the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ. Lord of heaven, Lord of the universe, Lord of his church.

Thirdly and finally he is Lord of your life and of mine. We know the emphasis of the New Testament writers that they were bond slaves of Jesus Christ. They willingly accepted, gladly accepted the rule and the reign of Christ over their lives.

Paul makes the famous and fundamental definition of a Christian in 1 Corinthians 7 verse 19. He says you are not your own. You're not your own, you're bought with a price.

Now what does that mean in practical terms? Well I like David I'm going to try and do the impossible. I'm going to try and tell you in five or six minutes what that means to me. And it means basically five things.

First of all it means Christ's authority over my use of time. If you're a Christian then Jesus Christ is Lord of every moment of your life. You can no longer live selfishly doing what you please.

You are a slave and you must obey your master's instruction. That's why I get so concerned when I look at the lifestyle of many Christians today. It seems that our Christianity very often is a Christianity of convenience.

Thousands of people in assemblies up and down the land come to the assembly once on a Sunday and never through the week. Thousands of young people who attend gospel concerts by the tens of thousands would never be found in a bible study listening to the word of God being expounded. The plain fact is if you analyze it carefully that the majority of people never really put themselves out for Jesus Christ.

Their basic motivation remains unchanged even after the so-called conversion experience which they've passed through. Secondly it means Christ's authority over my use of money. Here we come to what is

probably the greatest failing of the Christian church in the western world.

Donald Hay the fellow and tutor of economics at Jesus College Oxford has written this. It is I believe one of the greatest failings of the church today that the consumption patterns of Christians apparently differ so little from those of unbelievers around them. There could be no better indication to our materialistic neighbors that our faith means very little to us than that there should be no difference in the very area to which our secular society is dedicated.

The accumulation of possession. It is my constant grief as I travel around churches and assemblies of all varieties listening to people condemning worldliness in others because of the length of their hair or their skirt or the kind of music which they enjoy. And while they sit in condemnation it's obvious that they have imbibed the most prevalent spirit of our age.

The spirit of materialism. Does Christ have authority over your use of money? With one billion hungry neighbors in this world. It's a vital question.

Thirdly for me it means Christ's authority over my doctrine. Paul warns his son Timothy in 2nd Timothy 4 that the time is coming when people will no longer endure sound doctrine. But wanting to have their ears tickled they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires.

And they will turn away their ears from the truth and decide to miss. What a sober warning that is for the people of our generation. We are living in a generation where many keen systems are being drawn away into false teaching and imbalance.

If you analyze carefully you will find that the people who are being drawn away very often are the most keen. Those who want the most from God. Those who want to experience everything that God has for them.

Those are the people who are often being drawn away into splinter groups and heresies of all varieties. We must bring all teaching whether it's the traditional teaching of Alice M. Blue or the new teaching which we may be hearing from various avenues. We must bring all teaching back to the touchstone of the word of God under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Fourthly it means Christ's authority over my morals. This is probably the great battleground for young Christians in the next decade. If materialism is the prominent spirit of our age then permissiveness must come a close second.

The advertisers of our age are suggesting that indulgence in sex, drink and so on are signs of true manliness. That's the spirit of our day. If you're a real man then you can take this or you can take the other.

There's been a very interesting change of emphasis in evangelism as well which is affecting this situation. Possibly only ten years ago the office party, the student party, participation in a trade union, such things were taboo. There was no question they were taboo.

Now there are questions. Should we not be infiltrating these institutions? Should we not be seeking to be the salt of the earth in that particular place? Now I haven't time to answer that all important question but my point tonight is that this new emphasis is affecting this area of morals. You see there are many many more questions to be answered.

If you're seeking to be a godly influence in the world then if you've chosen to separate yourself from the world as much as you possibly can. These questions can only be brought back individually, question by question, situation by situation under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ and the word of God. You know if you do that young person you will immediately find that ninety percent of all moral questions are answered right here.

No question, no doubt. I believe there's a ten percent of difficulty in the area of morals. Ten percent of questions you may not find a clear immediate answer if you study the word of God and you must discuss such things.

You must talk about such things. Ninety percent of your answers you will find here. I believe this sick world is ready for a generation of young men and women who will take a positive, not a negative, a positive biblical stance on questions of morality.

Young people tonight I plead with you to think through, talk through these areas. It's no use trying to decide what you believe in the moment of temptation. That's too late.

You think through these areas now. You talk about these areas now and if the church continues her tragic silence on these issues you ask questions. Asking loud and clear, let's get this whole area of morals out into the light and see what scripture and our authority of the Lord has to say on these vital matters.

Finally Christ has authority over my future. Some of you are making great decisions over your future at this time. You're choosing lines of study which are probably going to affect the remainder of your life.

Now you've been to the courier's office haven't you? And that's good. But have you been to our authority of the Lord? You're bought with a price. Your life is not your own.

You have no right whatsoever to make these great decisions. Marriage, career, where to live and so on, without spending time waiting upon the Lord who bought you with his own blood at the cross. Jesus is the risen Lord.

He's the Lord of glory, the one who's worthy of the old worship. He's Lord of the universes, the one in whom you can confide and trust completely. He's Lord of the church.

He's Lord of your life, the one who demands and deserves implicit obedience. It's God's will that the one who is preeminent in heaven should not just be a symbol here on earth, but should be the real ruler in your church and in your life. May it be so for his name's sake.

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