

# Seeking His Preeminence - Part 1

by Lehman Strauss

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*Lehman Strauss emphasizes the importance of faith, love, and hope in the life of a Christian, and prays for the saints to be filled with the knowledge of God's will and to walk worthy of the Lord.*

**Duration:** 29:09

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 13:13, Colossians 1:4-5, Colossians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 4:1, James 1:5

**Topics:** "Preeminence"

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## Description

In this sermon, Lehmann Strauss shares his personal experience of receiving a new vision and understanding of the importance of preaching and teaching the Word of God. He recounts a near-death experience and his prayer to be spared in order to care for his handicapped wife and continue his ministry. Strauss emphasizes the significance of finding, following, and finishing God's will for one's life, highlighting the potential for any Christian to fall into sin. He urges listeners to not judge those who have fallen but to recognize their own capacity for sin. The sermon is based on Paul's epistle to the Colossians and emphasizes the importance of being filled with knowledge of God's will.

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## Transcript

I was in Washington, D.C. some years ago on the day that our late President John Fitzgerald Kennedy was assassinated. I was preaching in a Baptist church only about eight blocks from the White House, and that night, after finished preaching, we had heard that President Kennedy had been assassinated in Dallas, and I decided to walk over to the White House, and they had a light on in the Oval Room. Leaning against the telephone pole, I looked up to that room and prayed for our nation and for the President's family.

As I leaned against that telephone pole, God spoke to me. I didn't hear any voices, I didn't see any vision, but the message came through clear. It said to me, Laman Strauss, you have an office higher, holier, and more heavenly than the office of the President of these United States.

You are my ambassador. And I got a new, fresh vision of the value and the importance of preaching and teaching the Word of God. As I was close to death three years ago, pronounced clinically dead, I said, Lord, if it please you, spare me to do two things.

Number one, spare me to take care of my handicapped wife, and secondly, spare me long enough to do some more preaching and teaching. You don't know how honored I am today to be God's representative.

What a privilege to speak for him.

Open your Bible, please, to Paul's epistle to the Colossians. Now, I don't feel sorry for the people who were here at the first service. I am repeating the message.

This is the custom in this church for two morning services. That's what the pastor does each Sunday. And if you heard it before, at the first service, I will tell you what I told a lady who came to hear me preach in New York one summer.

After the message, she came up to me and she said, you let me down. I said, why, how did I leave you down? She said, I was in Florida last winter, and I heard you preach that same message. And I said, lady, God knows you must need it again.

So if you were here in the early service, and you dared to stay over again, the Lord knows you must need it again. And I'll tell you one thing, I need it. I'm sure you do too.

Now we're going to look to the Lord and ask him to guide us in the study of his word. Our loving Father, it is with a sense of awe that we bow before this holy Bible, the holy scriptures, this miracle book of the ages. We thank thee for the miracle of its preparation, and for the miracle of its presentation, and for the miracle of its preservation, and for the miracle of its power.

And we pray that we will have attentive minds, ears, hearts to receive and retain and respond to thy truth. Lord, if we know our own hearts, we want to walk out of this meeting place a little taller spiritually than when we came in. And Father, if anyone is present this morning who has never had a genuine salvation experience, they do not know what it means to have the joy of the forgiveness of sins.

O God, may that one not leave this building until he or she has received our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray this in his worthy and holy name. Amen.

The letter to the Colossians is one of 13 epistles that are assigned to Paul. There is a 14th book in your Bible, and it says at the top of the page, The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews. Now that title at the top of the page is not inspired of God.

The title at the top of the page of this book is not inspired of God. The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians. The inspired text begins with verse 1. We are not sure who penned Hebrews.

It really doesn't matter too much. We know that God is the author of it, and that's really all that matters. But we do know that Paul penned this epistle.

We know it because his name appears in the text, the inspired text, chapter 1 and verse 1. The first chapter of this letter to the Colossians has a very simple outline. It begins with Paul's prelude. He has some introductory remarks to say to those in Colossae.

Paul had never been in the city of Colossae. He had visited Rome, he had visited Ephesus, many other places to whom he wrote letters, but he had never been to Colossae in Asia Minor. But the Spirit of God who guided him in writing this book gave him some wisdom because there were people in Colossae who needed this message.

And so Paul writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit gives to that assembly in Colossae in Asia Minor some very important truth. It's applicable to us today. The Word of God never loses its appeal.

It constantly meets the need. It is current, never outdated, never outmoded. The Word of God will never lose its power.

It never changes. Heaven and earth will pass away, but God's Word will never pass away. It's for you and it's for me this morning.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and did you notice to whom it is written? It is written to the saints and the faithful brethren. Now the word saint is the noun form of the verb sanctify. To sanctify is a simple word.

It means to set apart. The tabernacle was sanctified. A tabernacle can't sin.

A tabernacle is neither moral nor immoral. A tabernacle is amoral, yet it's been sanctified. The vestments of the priest in the tabernacle services were sanctified.

Now the garment that a person wears can't sin. It's neither moral nor immoral. It is amoral.

It simply means that those garments were set apart by God for holy purposes. So this is written to the saints. All believers are saints.

I went through the Bible once alphabetically and listed designations of the Christian beginning with every letter of the alphabet. A, we are ambassadors. B, we are believers or brethren.

C, we are Christians. Right on down the line when I came to the letter S, there was no end of biblical designations. Believers are called sheep.

We're called sons. We're called stewards. We're called soldiers.

We're called saints. You see, the most often used designation for a Christian is the word saint. As far as the Christians goes, here in this church this morning, we have a fellowship of the saints.

Now if somebody wants to know who was speaking at the church this week, tell them Saint Laman Strauss is here. And I can prove that from the Bible. All believers are saints.

Now not all saints are saintly saints. Some are unsaintly saints. Now if my wife were here and you were to say, how does the old saint behave? She'd say, well, at times he's pretty saintly and sometimes he's not.

But a saint is a New Testament word for all believers. So you are a saint if you're saved. I hope you're a saintly saint and not an unsaintly saint.

But it was written to saints, to all the believers. In the beginning of this little epistle, Paul said some commendable things about the saints. Isn't it nice to think good things about people if you know some good things about them? I try to remember the good things.

I sat beside my dying wife a few weeks ago, and I dipped into my memory box. And I opened that memory box, and I pulled out from the beginning of our first meeting in seventh grade, back in the early 1920s, I pulled out of that memory box all the good things I could think of. It was a very happy experience to sit beside my dear dying wife and just remove from that memory box all the good things.

It's a pleasant experience. Try to remember the good things about folks and not the things that don't please you, and they'll be good for you. Paul starts out by commending them for some good things.

We call this Paul's praise of the saints. He wasn't praising the saints. He was praising God for the saints.

Now, there were three things that characterized the believers in the church at Colossae, and hopefully they characterized the saints in this church. They're marked in your Bible a triplet, a trilogy of truth that's found often in Scripture. In verse 4, Paul said, Since we heard of your faith, mark the word faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love, mark the word love, and in verse 5, for the hope, faith, love, and hope.

They are given in this order in 1 Corinthians 13, 13. Now abideth faith, hope, and love, a trilogy of timely truths that should characterize every true child of God. Now, what does he say about these three precious graces? First of all, he said, You have a faith that is not secret.

A faith that is not secret. Notice he said, Since we heard of your faith. May I ask you a question? I'm going to anyhow.

Has anyone heard of your faith lately? Hmm? I flew in on the plane yesterday, Friday, I'm sorry, and there was only one vacant seat. I couldn't get a reserve seat in advance. So all the way back, the tail end of the plane, the only empty seat, and sat beside a man, and he said, What's your business? I said, I'm a teacher.

He said, What do you teach? I said, The English Bible. He said, Never heard anybody had that for a profession. I said, That's my business.

Well, he said, What do you teach? Well, I said, I teach that all people are sinners, including you. And I teach that the Bible says Jesus Christ is a great Savior, and he wants to save all sinners, even you. Well, he said, I go to church.

I said, What else do you do? Well, he said, I work. What do you learn in church? Oh, I learn the Ten Commandments. I said, What are they? Oh, he said, I never killed anybody.

I said, Go on. He knew two of them. I said, You're keeping something you don't even know what they are.

Let me tell you a story, and I told him the story of my conversion. He heard of my faith in Christ Jesus. Lots of opportunities, dear people.

Make sure folks are hearing about your faith. I meet with folks I've known for many years, and I always inquire for their family. Met a friend of mine, said, How's Becky doing? Oh, she's now the assistant manager in the bank.

She's doing well. She has a good salary. I said, How's Becky doing spiritually? You'd think I insulted the man.

He actually appeared to resent it. As though I was casting aspersions on his daughter. I'm not concerned about how much money she's making.

I'm concerned about her faith, her spiritual condition. Anybody been hearing of your faith lately? Don't brag on how successful your children are if you can't add a testimony, and they're doing well spiritually. They're doing well spiritually.

Paul said, We heard of your faith. Then he said, You have a faith that is not secret, but a love that is not partial. You have a love for everybody.

A love for all the saints. Oh, I had 25 years in the pastor. How I would love to be the pastor just for one year in a church where everybody loved everybody.

That'd be a change, wouldn't it? That'd be a change. I'll tell you, when the church reaches that peak, you're going to have a continuous revival. People will get saved.

Love is the greatest power in all the world. Now abideth faith, hope, and love these three, but the greatest of these is love. Love is the greatest commandment.

A new commandment, I give unto you that ye love one another. Love is the greatest constraint. 2 Corinthians chapter 5, The love of Christ constraineth us, and love is the greatest covering.

1 Peter 5, Love covers a multitude of sins. Love never gossips about the sins of other believers. Love covers it up.

When I was a boy, we used to put our garbage out in garbage cans along the street. In the summertime in Philadelphia, it was so hot and so humid, and the maggots would accumulate in that garbage pail. I always felt sorry for the garbage man.

He had to pull the lid off of that stinking mess in that garbage can on a hot, humid summer day. When I got older, I began to think some Christian seemed to delight in pulling the lid off of spiritual garbage cans. Talk about the sins of their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Just enjoy that kind. Love covers a multitude of sins. Love for all the saints.

Love that was not partial. Everybody loved everybody. Now, some folks are not easy to love.

Some of us have personalities that are a little harder to love than others. But you know, if the Lord Jesus siphoned us off like that, he wouldn't love very many of us, would he? There's not a sinner in all this world for whom Christ did not die and whom he doesn't love. He loves you this morning.

If you're not saved, he loves you enough to die for your sins, and you're not worthy of it. The next time you're tempted to gossip about some Christian, just remember what the Lord did for you. He loves you and he forgave you.

A love that was not partial. And then they had a hope that was not misplaced. Notice what your Bible says.

The hope was laid up for them in heaven. Heaven is not our hope. I want to go to heaven, and I'm going to go to heaven.

And when I get there, I'm going to expect to see my dear wife. I know somebody in the audience is saying, do you think you're going to know Elsie in heaven? Do you think I'm going to have less sense in heaven than I had here on earth? You better believe I'm going to know her. You better believe I'm going to know her.

My hope is not in heaven. My hope is not in a place. It's in a person.

Look at verse 27 of this very first chapter of Colossians. Christ in you, the hope of glory. Where is Christ now? He's in heaven.

What is our hope? Titus 2.13 Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. When he comes, the dead will be raised, the living will be raptured, caught up, there will be a reunion on the way up, and the result will be we shall ever be with the Lord. This is the believer's hope, the hope of the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's praise of the saints. Thank God for a church. The members had a faith that was not secret and a love that was not partial and a hope that was not misplaced.

It's easy to love people who show love for you. But remember, dear friends, the Lord loves everybody and very few show much love for him. Now let's look at Paul's prayer for the saints.

First, his praise of the saints. Now his prayer for the saints. We're moving down to verse 9. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you.

Now what did he pray for? Well, we all need prayer. None of us have reached the state or stage of life where we're no longer in need of prayer. I need prayer.

I'm not begging for pity. Please, don't pity me. Don't pity me.

I would guess right now I am possibly the loneliest person in this auditorium. But I want you to know, while I'm lonely, I'm not alone. I have a wonderful companion in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I'm not alone. But we all need prayer. We should pray for one another.

God forbid that I should sin in ceasing to pray for you. And God forbid that you should sin in ceasing to pray for your pastor and your staff and for one another. We all need prayer.

Now Paul said, I'm praying for you. Now Paul, what are you asking for? A friend of mine, I'd known him for 55 years before I went into ministry, called me on the telephone and said, I've known you for 55 years. And he said, I know what you've been going through in the last seven years.

He said, how shall I pray for you? I don't know how to pray for you. I pray every day, but I don't know what to pray for. And I said, just pray that I'll end up well, that I won't blow it this late in life.

I just want to end up well, pleasing God. Just pray for me for that. That's all I'm asking for.

Well, he said, I'll do that. And I hope he's doing it, and that's what I want. I want to end up well for the Lord.

Don't you? You don't want to blow it now, do you? Hmm? I have children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren. What a tragedy if I should blow it now. And they have to say, well, Dad did all right until he came down to the end, and then he blew it.

Granddad did all right until he got to the end, and then he failed. Had a great, great granddaddy, and he did all right, but somehow at the end of the line, he just blew it. Oh, God forbid.

And that man prays for me every day. He assured me that I'll end up well. Now, Paul said I want you to end up well, but I want to show you how to go along through life.

First of all, he said that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will. Mark the word will. In verse 9, mark the word wisdom.

In verse 10, mark the words walk and work. And you have four key words all beginning with the letter W in your Bible. Mark them.

Now, you may not have those words if you have a different translation from the one I'm using, but those are four key words. Now, Paul said I'm praying for you that you might be filled with the knowledge of God's will. Did you know the most important thing in life for the Christian? Are you listening now? Are you ready? Number one, find God's will for your life.

Number two, follow God's will for your life. And number three, pray that you will finish doing God's will for your life. And number four, that you will not fail in the will of God.

The greatest tragedy that could come to any one of us Christians is to cross the stage of human experience and somewhere fail in the will of God. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, nothing worse could happen to you or to me. And you and I are capable of committing any sin in the book.

Every man and every woman, including myself, listening to my voice, you can do, you're capable of doing what Jim Baker did, what Tammy Baker's been doing, and what Jimmy Swigert's done. Any one of us is capable. Don't look down your nose at these people who have fallen.

We're all capable of it. You can commit any sin in the book. You are capable, and so am I. Oh, that we might find and follow and finish in the will of God.

Now, to have a knowledge of God's will is one thing, but to follow that will wisely is something else. Notice he said that you might be filled with a knowledge of his will in all wisdom. What is wisdom? All wisdom is the right use of knowledge.

One may acquire knowledge and not know how to use that knowledge. We have people today are educated above their own intellect. We have more educated ignorance today than we've ever had.

Believe me, dear people, a string of degrees after a person's name doesn't mean that they're wise. They can have knowledge and be stupid. Paul said, I'm praying that you'll have wisdom, the right use of your knowledge.

And wisdom is pleasing God. You say, how do I get this wisdom? You ask for it. It's that simple.

James 1.5, If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. Do you want to be a wise person? Do you want to use what knowledge you have to glorify God? Ask God for wisdom in the right use of your knowledge. And then in verse 10 he said, I'm praying for you that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.

May I press and impress upon you the fact that that does not mean walking worthy of the Lord, pleasing all people. Pleasing all people. Turn two pages in your Bible, maybe three, to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. Just about three pages.

1 Thessalonians chapter 4. Furthermore then we beseech you brethren and exhort you by the Lord Jesus that as you have received of us how you ought to walk and to please all of your friends and your family. Is that in your Bible? Oh no. That's the reversed vision of the Bible.

That's the reversed vision. We can't please people and please God. You see the pleasing here is to please God.

And that's what Paul's talking about in Colossians chapter 1 and verse 10. Walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, pleasing the Lord in all things. It's a wonderful thing to please God but to say if I please God maybe everybody won't be pleased with me.

You don't have to answer to the people but we do have to answer to God. And God's not hard to please. I've been a Christian now for 63 years since 1927.

Little more than 63. And God's never made a demand on me that was more than I could carry out. God's not hard on his children.

God wants to be pleased and God's not hard to please. Pray that God will give you knowledge and wisdom.

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