

By Him All Things Consist

by Vance Havner

Christ is the Allness of Jesus Christ, and everything centers and converges in Him.

Scripture: Ephesians 1:22, Colossians 1:16

Topics: "The Allness of Christ", "Christ as Central to Life"

Description

Vance Havner emphasizes the all-encompassing nature of Jesus Christ, asserting that He is central to all aspects of life, creation, redemption, and the Gospel. Paul's writings illustrate that Christ is not just a historical figure but the very essence of existence, sustaining and unifying all things. Havner warns against the tendency to diminish Christ's significance, urging believers to recognize Him as the source of their faith, holiness, and fellowship. He concludes that true understanding and fulfillment in life come from acknowledging that everything consists by Him and for Him. The sermon calls Christians to center their lives around Christ, who is the key to understanding Scripture, the church, and their own experiences.

Transcript

When Paul declared in Ephesians that "Christ filleth all in all" and in Colossians that "Christ is all and in all," he was not merely giving us pious phrases to roll under our tongues; he was stating the fixed and fundamental fact of the Allness of Jesus Christ. Christ was everything to Paul. To the Corinthians he had written, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." To the Galatians he wrote: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ." To the Ephesians he wrote of Him who "filleth all in all," and to the Philippians he declared, "To me to live is Christ."

Writing to the Colossians, he met an outbreak of heresy not so much by pointing out its errors, although he did that, as by presenting the Lord Jesus Christ as "the image of the invisible God," "Christ in you, the hope of glory," "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," "Christ, who is our life," "Christ, all and in all."

It has been a long time since Colossians was written, but there is the same tendency to belittle our Lord. Thousands of Christians localize Him in their thinking either to Palestine a long time ago or at the Father's right hand now. One thinks of the preacher, back from a trip to the Holy Land, who bored everybody by continually relating it. Finally, an old preacher observed, "I'd rather walk with Christ five minutes now than five years where He has been!" We need the sweep of Paul's vision to see Christ past, present, and future. No wonder so many Christians are pale, sickly, anemic: they do not know what a Christ they have.

If Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, Beginning and Ending, Author and Finisher of our faith, if by Him all things consist, it follows that everything centers and converges in Him.

By Him creation consists. "For by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created by him and for him" (Col. 1:16). How many Christians ever think of Christ as the One "by whom all things are created," as Colossians puts it; "by whom all things were made: as John puts it; "by whom God made the worlds," as Hebrews put it? Why did God make the universe, anyway? He made it that one day Christ might be all in all, that one day, from tiniest electron to mightiest planet, it might glorify Jesus. Scientists cannot give the reason for the universe: Christ is the reason. Creation is now enslaved in corruption, but one day it will display the glory of Christ, the bondage of sin will be broken, the Sons of God be manifested. And Christ not only created the universe and is its object but He sustains it now. The very existence of each of us, to say nothing of our salvation, depends on Him. Without Him the universe would fall apart.

By Him redemption consists. In order to conform men to the image of His Son, God gave His Son. There is no salvation in any other.

By Him the Gospel consists. The Gospel is simply the good news about Jesus, that He came, died, and rose again. It is not a program, plan, or philosophy that saves, but a Person. It takes a Person to reach persons, a Life to reach lives. The Gospel is a personal matter: "HE shall save His people from THEIR sins." "I if I be lifted up will draw all men unto ME."

By Him the Bible consists. True, we see Christ in the light of the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of Him. But we can see the Scriptures only in the light of Christ. He is the Key to the Scriptures. He expounded unto His disciples in all the Scriptures the things concerning HIMSELF. All roads lead to Him throughout the Book. Someone has said that the Pentateuch gives us the foreshadowings of Christ; the Prophets, the foretellings of Christ; the Psalms, the feelings of Christ; the Gospels the facts of Christ; the epistles, the fruits of Christ.

By Him the church consists. "God gave him to be head over all things to the church which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22,23). We are married to Him, members of His Body. Any group that feeds on itself and not on Christ is a monstrosity, for it is a headless body.

By Him doctrine consists. Some Christians become disciples of a phrase instead of a person, they harp on one string and ride one hobby. Some get off on a tangent on sanctification, for instance. But sanctification, strictly speaking, is not just a doctrine: Christ is our sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30). Spurgeon said, "Holiness is not the way to Christ; Christ is the way to holiness." Better still, Christ is our holiness.

Some make the Holy Spirit the figurehead of movements, but the Spirit testifies not of Himself but of Christ (John 15:26). In that classic passage on the Spirit, John 7:37-39, it is Jesus who is at the center of the stage: "If any man thirst, let him come unto ME and drink. He that believeth on ME, as the scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water. This spake HE of the Spirit which they that believe on HIM should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that JESUS was not yet glorified." Any supposed experience of the Spirit that draws attention to itself and not to Christ is not to be trusted.

By Him the resurrection consists. Jesus said to Martha, "Your brother shall rise again." She said, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Martha was orthodox, but she needed to move

from the doctrinal to the personal. So Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life." The resurrection is not something to believe but Someone to believe.

By Him faith consists. It is not the quantity or the quality but the object of our faith that matters. Saving faith is faith in Christ, not merely believing things about Christ. The man with the best nerves is the man least conscious of his nerves, and the man with the best faith is the man least conscious of his faith but most conscious of his Christ.

By Him all Christian experience consists. The Christian life is simply Christ, the indwelling and outliving Christ. "To me to live is Christ." The victorious life or the abundant or deeper life, whatever you choose to call it, is just Christ, more of Christ and less of self. He is our Life, not just a teacher of how to live.

By Him separation consists. He is the Great Divider, who came not to send peace but a sword, and He must separate us. Separation is not just quitting things, it is going unto HIM without the camp bearing HIS reproach. When He was on earth, there was often a division of the people on account of Him, and He still divides men today. But there are also those who cause division among us; they are to be watched and avoided.

The main thing about the Lord's return is the Lord. Some are looking merely for something to happen, not for Someone to come. We are not looking for a program of events but for a Person.

By Him Christian fellowship consists. "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). I have heard of a church with a "JESUS ONLY" sign in front. One night a storm blew out the first three letters and left "US ONLY." That has happened in more ways than one these days. The basis of fellowship is Jesus Christ. You cannot get the saints together at any other point. We are already one in Him. We have so many cliques now that an appropriate greeting would be, "How are you clique-ing?" Some saints have no testimony, only an argument. The mark of true fellowship is "love to all the saints," which springs from "faith in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1:4).

Indeed by Him testimony consists. We are His witnesses, not His lawyers. "We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord." There is too much sermonizing and too little witnessing. People do not come to Christ at the end of an argument. Simon Peter comes to Jesus because Andrew goes after him with a testimony.

By Him our fruitfulness consists. "He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). It is not what is done for Him but by Him that counts. I wonder how much of our church activity really proceeds from Him. We think it depends on us, our effort, our organization, our enthusiasm. We need to get our eyes off our efficiency and on His sufficiency.

By Him the answer to every need consists. God has promised to supply all our need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. If we need victory we can reign in life through Christ Jesus. If we need peace, the peace of God will garrison our hearts through Christ Jesus. If we need wisdom, He is our wisdom. If we need strength, we can do all things through Christ. Like the hungry multitude of old, we need not depart from Him for anything.

By Him the future consists. For the believer, the prospect is not merely going to heaven but departing to be WITH CHRIST. It is His presence that makes heaven so glorious. And it is separation from Him that is hell's worst feature. It is all the difference between "Come, ye blessed of my Father" and "Depart, I never

knew you." To be cut off from Him who is life cannot but be unending death; to be cut off from the Light can be but eternal darkness. The most glorious thing about heaven is that we shall be like HIM.

By Him the future of the universe created by Him and consisting by Him will be consummated in Him. In the dispensation of the fulness of times God will gather together in one all things in Christ, in heaven, and on earth, even in Him.

The little girl who, failing to reassemble a torn up map of the United States, discovered that on the reverse side was a picture of George Washington and that by putting his picture together she also assembled the map, illustrates a profounder truth. Nothing can be assembled, either one's life or the universe, apart from Christ. But when we know Him all things else find their place, for by Him all things consist, and we are complete in Him.

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