

Jesus is Head of the Church
Pastor Ashley Brown
Wasilla Bible Church
July 18, 2010

We are going to be continuing on this morning in our summer sermon series based out of Colossians chapter 1 where Paul bursts into praise of Jesus, proclaiming exactly who He is and all kinds of different aspects about that. In particular today we're going to be looking at the truth that Jesus is the head of the church. Colossians 1:18 says that Jesus is the head of the body, the church. What we're going to do in this sermon is actually going to be a little bit different than most of the sermons that we do here. Usually we like to go and jump into a passage of Scripture and just dig into that passage very, very well. Now the thing is with this, as I was working through it over the past couple of weeks, I've just felt like we needed to go topically with this and see kind of a theme of Scripture, ok, and kind of trace threads. So we will hop around and look at different passages. Feel free to flip to them as I refer to them if you would like. But what we will do is we will end up in Ephesians chapter 1, verses 15-23. And that's where we'll kind of conclude the sermon, looking at how this all pulls together.

As we look at this, the basic structure of this, we're going to look at three basic questions...the third of which will be answered by Ephesians 1. The first question that comes to mind with Jesus as the head of the church is well, wait a second...what is the church? Ok? Because a lot of times we can say Jesus is the head of the church, and we throw that out there and pay lip service to it, and we gloss right over it without really understanding what we're talking about. So what is the church? The second question is well, what does it mean that Jesus is the *head* of the church? Ok? What does that mean? And the third is basically the question, and this is where we'll end up with Ephesians 1, is, well why should Jesus be the head of the church? What gives Him the right? Ok? So that's what we're going to look at.

We're going to start off by looking at and answering this first question—what is the church? When Paul talks about the church in Colossians 1, and actually throughout...and where Scripture talks about the church...typically it is speaking (unless if it makes reference to a particular local church), typically what it is speaking about is the universal church, meaning the community of all true believers for all time. Ok? It's a community of all true believers for all time. Ephesians 5:22-about 33, right in there'll hit on this, but at Ephesians 5:25 tell us that those whom Christ has redeemed (that's what it's referring to when we speak about the church), those whom Christ has redeemed and is in the process of sanctifying so that He can present the church to Himself a pure, spotless bride. So it's all the people whom Christ has redeemed. We also see, for instance, as an example, in Hebrews 12:1-2 that it's the believers, those whom Christ has redeemed and is in the process of or has sanctified for all time, ages past, ages now, ages to come. That's part of what Hebrews 12 refers to as the cloud of witnesses...those whom God has justified, sanctified, redeemed, who have gone before and are now in His presence, and they are cheering us on in our race of faith, in our journey. And they are cheering us on! And the writer of Hebrews is referring to this cloud of witnesses and saying 'Listen, we are still part of a church; we are still part of a congregation, a body of believers including those who have come before. Set your eyes and realize that they have run the race well, and they are cheering you on. You run it well, just like they did.' That's kind of the idea behind Hebrews 12:1-2.

Now with this I feel like I need to point out a couple of things here as well. Community...what I would say about this...the reality that the universal church is a community of true believers, of all true believers, for all time...what I would point out is this is referring to people, not buildings or organizations. A lot of times, and I say this because I think it's just part of our culture, but it's not really...and I know that I'm not the only one, but it's part of just the way that we talk. We talk about "I'm going to church on Sunday." No! You cannot go to church. I don't know if you've realized that, but biblically it is impossible, really, for you to go to church. You *are* the church, or you *are not* the church. You don't go to church, because the church is not a place. The church is a body of believers, a group of people. You are the church, so be the church. I don't know if you realize this, but if our building...I know this would never happen, but let's say we had a fire and the building somehow got damaged, and we could not meet here. That would not mean that Wasilla Bible Church had ended. Wasilla Bible Church would still exist, because there would still be a body of believers who come together, who identify themselves by Christ, who are true believers who are meeting and who are the church.

It also kind of hints at this reality that it kind of brings a different perspective to say, like, 'church service'...'I'm gonna go to church services.' I don't know if you've realized this, but a lot of times consumer mentality and our culture seeps into the way that we think about church and God more than perhaps we've realized. The whole point of a

church service is not so that you can come and be fed. Biblically speaking, it's not. That may happen, and Lord willing, hopefully that does happen. The reason that you go to a church service is that is the time that you go to service the church. That is the time that you go to serve other members, other members of this community, this body of believers. In fact, you aren't going to church service unless you are serving other members of that body, unless you are serving other true believers, unless if you were using that God has given you to build them up and to increase their faith and understanding, unless if you were using your gifts to help strengthen the body. And it comes in all different ways. The cool thing about that is church service actually goes on outside the walls of this church and outside the hours of Sunday morning that 'church services' are. Because church service is actually any time you are serving the church, your fellow believers. There's a thought for you. It also brings a whole different perspective, and I'm absolutely confident that this is essential to the Christian faith, which is part of the reason we encourage you...if you are not involved in serving in some sort of way your fellow believers the church, and those around you, this is for your spiritual health. This is part of the Christian life. That's why we encourage you. But figure out the ways that God has gifted you, or things that...maybe you aren't quite sure. Maybe...go ahead and plug in somewhere. Find some way to use the gifts, the resources, the abilities that God has given you to encourage and build up others.

1 Peter 2:4-8...I'm gonna refer to this somewhat, where it speaks about how Jesus is taking us, those who are true believers, and it refers to us as living stones, ok? And He is piecing us together. He is piecing together a community, a body of believers whom He is building into a temple. A temple is a place where people who do not know God can go to encounter Him. The reason Jesus is building us together into a temple is so that we will be a community of people who truly know God. And if people truly want to know God, they can come to us and experience His truth, His grace, His love...all with the truth of Scripture. It also refers to us as priests. This is where we refer to the priesthood of the believer, because it explains that a priest is someone who intercedes on behalf of a person with God, ok? People who do not know God...our role is to intercede on their behalf and try to help bring them to God, reconcile them to God. But this is all done by people. It's not a building; it's not an organization. We could spend a whole sermon there, but we won't be able to. So we're gonna move on.

The other aspect that I would point out here is that it's a community of true believers. Just because you go to church doesn't mean you are part of the church. Don't know if you've realized this before, but that's biblically a consistent theme. A true believer is someone who is in an obedient, personal relationship with Christ... someone who is in an obedient, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Doesn't matter if they go to church or if they're religious. If they don't have that obedient, personal relationship with Christ...going on Jesus' words and those of the apostles, I would say they are not a part of the church. They are not a true believer. For instance, in Matthew 7:21-23 Jesus in verse 21, He says, 'Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord,' but they will not enter into My kingdom. They will not know Me. They will depart from Me. Many will not be saved. Ok? But only those who do the will of My Father who is in heaven.' And he goes on in verse 22, 23, and says 'Many,' reaffirming this and clarifying, 'Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not do this in Your name; did we not do that in Your name? Didn't we go to church? Didn't we pray? Wasn't I involved in some sort of ministry? Didn't I teach? Didn't I do amazing, wonderful things for You in Your name?' And Jesus responds,

"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness.'"

That is a very sobering reality, because Jesus is speaking to people who claim to be His followers. This is the Sermon on the Mount. This is how He concludes the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is speaking to people who had traveled from all over the place to hear Him and would claim to be His followers. And speaking to them He says, 'Many will say,' and He is speaking to them, to this group, 'Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord.'" What's the defining characteristic? 'I never knew you. You did not have a personal relationship with Me. Why? Because you are workers of lawlessness. You acted, you lived your life, as though you were a law unto yourself. You never submitted yourself in relationship to Me, where I was in charge of your life. You never allowed Me to be king in your life. You were treating Me as though I was some errand boy. You never really knew Me. I never...you were never in an obedient, personal relationship with Me. Depart from Me.' It's a very sobering thing because Jesus says that many will say this. That's a very sobering thing, because He's talking not about people who aren't following Him; He's talking to a multitude of people who are saying, 'Yep, I'm gonna follow Jesus. I wanna go here.'

It kinda actually leads us to the second part of this, which...the second question, which is 'Ok, well what does it mean that Jesus is the head of the church?' Ok? What does it mean that Jesus is the head, or the Lord, of the church? What I would say is this. Because the church is people, ok, and it's those who are true believers, what happens is it means that Jesus must be head...and He is, by default, head...of anyone who is part of the church individually. Ok? So individually He is your head, and corporately you have a whole bunch of believers. If you have many people that Jesus is their head, then when they come together that group, by default...who's the head?

You can respond... Who's the head? If you have a whole bunch of individuals and Jesus is Lord of their life—He is calling the shots, He is in charge—when they come together who do you think is going to be in charge of that group, of that body of believers? Jesus! Ok, so that is kind of the general progression here.

And so what we're going to do is I just want to point this out. First of all, He is head, He is Lord of the church individually. If you are a part of the church, meaning if you are a part of that community of all true believers of all time, then He is your head. If He is not your head, you are not part of that community of believers. Now here is something that I'll point out to you in this. That's part of the requirement of godly repentance. That really is. You look at it scripturally, and I'll point through and walk you through this. But there is a great definition of biblical repentance that a man named Mark Driscoll does in his book "Doctrine." He says that

"Repentance is the Spirit-empowered acknowledgment of sin..."

Ok, first of all the Holy Spirit is working in your life and helps you, empowers you, to come to the point that you acknowledge that you are a sinner. But it doesn't just end there. Ok? It's this acknowledgment

"...that results in a change of mind about who and what is lord in our life, what is important, and what is good and bad."

--Mark Driscoll, "Doctrine", p. 317

Let me explain this briefly. How many of you guys...how many of you are parents? Parents? Ok. Now I will be expecting some sort of response here, because I'm guessing I'm not the only one. So, I have a few young children. My youngest, Alistair, he's not quite a year old yet, so I haven't experienced this with him. But my two others, they're a little bit older and I have experienced this with them. You walk in...say you walk into their bedroom, or you walk into some room of the house, and you come in and you surprise them. And all of a sudden they turn around and give the big 'deer in the headlights' look. And you have just caught them red-handed, doing something that is a big no-no. They know they are not ever supposed to whatever it is they're doing. What happens? Ok, so maybe I'm the only parent who's ever done this. Am I the only parent who has kids who are like ever disobedient? What happens? Ok, they defend themselves. They start "I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" 'I'm crying, I'm breaking...' And all of a sudden you go into self-defense mode, right? Because they're like, 'Oh, no! I know that the wrath of Dad is about to come down upon me, because I have just totally done what I am not supposed to do.' And they know that they are going to suffer consequences, so all of a sudden they start "I'm sorry! I'm sorry! Here, don't...don't give me a spanking...ground me...take this away..." Whatever it is, what ever your punishment of choice at that time is, they start pleading for it and begging that they will not suffer the consequences. Is that godly sorrow, biblically speaking? No. They aren't sorry that they were doing what they were doing. What they're sorry for is that they got caught. What they're sorry about is that they are about to suffer the consequences, and they're trying to get out of the...they're somehow trying to negotiate this way, where they don't have to obey Mom and Dad, but they can still live their life the way that they want to and not suffer the consequences.

It's the same thing...I tell you, I have learned a lot about God and my relationship with Him through parenting. So those of you who are thinking about having kids someday...great blessing...anyway, what I would say is this. In the same way godly repentance, biblical repentance is when we are not just...and this is a beautiful thing when I see this among my kids, and I'm starting to see it with my two older kids at times...where when I catch them, all of a sudden their sorrow and their heartache...they don't care what punishment they get. They don't even start to try to defend themselves. What they are broken about is that they have just harmed and hurt the relationship that they have with me. In fact, where, like, Liam one time...he was like, 'Dad, do you...', he actually asked me if I still loved him, because he lied to me and he knows that lying is never ok. You do not lie; you tell the truth. And what he was most concerned...he didn't try to defend himself. He was just concerned about did he still have my love. And I'm able to reaffirm to him yes.

That is godly repentance. Because what happens is you're speaking about godly repentance, repentance that the Bible...that begins the Christian faith, is when you realize that you're a sinner but you aren't just trying to get out of the consequences. You aren't somehow just trying to have fire insurance. You aren't somehow just trying to 'Well, if there is a hell...' or 'Man, I don't want to go to hell, and so, just fine, I believe in you Jesus, but guess what? Get out of my way, let me run my life. I'm gonna try and figure out how I can do whatever I want to do while still avoiding the consequences.' That is not the godly repentance. Godly repentance is when there is a resulting change of mind about who and what is in charge of your life, namely Jesus is in charge. You no longer are. Not only that, but He totally redefines...because He's in charge, He redefines what is important in your life. Whatever is important is what He says is important. What is good and bad is what He says is good and bad. That's part of the reason that, as a congregation, our first core commitment is the centrality of Jesus Christ. Our second core

commitment is the authority of Scripture, because both of those things tell us this is what's important, this is what's good and bad, and we will base it on that. It doesn't mean we follow it perfectly. It means that that is our goal, and we realize that we are falling short, and we will repent when we fall short of that.

We'll move on though. And basically, there's...that's why...(oh, it's stuck, you may need to restart this.) There is a realization that because of this, the default position of a true believer is obedience to Jesus. If this is not your default position, I would have to argue that you are not a true believer, you are not a part of the church. You see, salvation depends on a faith...we use 'faith' in a lot of ways. 'Yes, I have faith. I believe this exists. I believe...'
Salvation depends on a faith that endures and is obedient. Any other type of faith, anything else, is not a real, biblical, saving faith. Now hear me out in this, because I am not arguing 'works salvation', ok? I'm not arguing that you somehow have to do all these good deeds in order to be saved. We are saved by faith and by grace, and that alone. At the same time, the faith that saves is a faith that results in obedience. It does not come as a result of obedience...it results in obedience. Ok? One says, 'Oh, works. Salvation says I do all the right things, and therefore I'm saved.' The other says, 'No, uh uh. I am saved by faith and by grace; and as a result I will obey.' And that is the basic default position. This is something that's a theme throughout Scripture. I sat down for about ten minutes in the last couple weeks, and there was a point in time where I was like, 'Ok, I'm just going to see where...different places where this comes up.' And in about ten minutes there were about fifteen or twenty different scriptures and passages that point to this that came to my mind; and I jotted them down. And I can't cover them all, but I'll point out a few of these to hopefully show to you that this is a consistent theme through Jesus' teachings and the teachings of the apostles.

I mentioned just a few moments ago Matthew 7:21-23, where Jesus says, 'Many who come to Me on that day...Lord, Lord...but depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness.' In verse 21 He says, 'Many will say to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' but they will not enter. Only those who do the will of My Father, who obey the will of My Father, will enter into the kingdom.' Obedience pops up. He's hitting at this difference in faith, a lip-service versus a repentance that has resulted in a changed life.

He goes on in verses 24 through 27... "and the wise man built his house upon the rock..." You guys know that one? Ok. Yes, ok. And the wise man built his...or the foolish man built his house upon the sand. What's the difference between those two? The foundation...yes! Ok, the foundation. What distinguishes...how do you know what your foundation is built upon? Quick test. One, the first? Ok, the storm comes, and it smashes, and it is demolished. Here's the thing I'll point out to you. The wise man, Jesus says, 'is the one who hears My words and obeys.' And once again He is speaking to people who claim to be His followers. The person who is destroyed is the one 'who hears My words but does not heed them.' The distinction is one person looks at it and says, 'This totally reorients everything in my life, and my entire life will be restructured around this truth.' If that is not the case, then you are not built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. Your life is built on the foundation of something else.

1 Timothy...this is a very sobering one for me; 1 Timothy 4:15-16. Paul is writing to Timothy, a young pastor who...he's writing to him and basically what he says is 'Listen, you need to practice, persist, pursue, progress...you push forward in your faith, and not just in your faith but in your teaching. You do not back off.' He says 'because by doing this, by pursuing, progressing, persisting, no matter what comes, you will save yourself; and not just yourself, but also those who hear you.' The implication of that is staggering. Paul is also, on the flip side, warning Timothy, 'If you do not continue to persist, to pursue, to persevere in your faith and in the accurate teaching of it, then your salvation is in question. And not just that, but anyone who hears you because you are leading them away from God.' It's one reason that I would ask for your prayers for anyone who is in any sort of Christian ministry, anyone who is in leadership over other believers.

There's another place, in 2 Timothy...2 Timothy 2:1-13...or excuse me, 11-13, where Paul...he tells Timothy, 'Listen, I endure everything for the sake of the elect. I persist, I endure, so that the elect will be saved.' Kind of based upon that same sort of...that same sort of principle there...'I have to endure because there are others who are keying off of me and following me. So I persevere no matter what comes.' And he follows it up in verse 12 and 13 by saying 'Timothy, if we endure we will reign with Him,' speaking of Jesus. 'If we deny Him, He will deny us.' That is the Apostle Paul telling Timothy, 'Even I am subject to this. I must persevere if I desire to reign with Him. And if I don't, if I turn around and deny Him, no matter how tough it gets, He will deny me because my faith is not a genuine, saving faith.' That's an immense amount of humility from the Apostle Paul, and it's also saying it applies to his pastor-friend, Timothy, who's a mentor of his. You can trace this through...and I could go through a number of passages. It's throughout James, throughout Hebrews...those are consistent themes...the book of 1 John, once again a consistent theme, where if you continue on persisting in your sin knowingly, then you aren't saved. It doesn't matter what you say. Your life has not been transformed and reoriented around Jesus Christ. Revelation chapter 3, verses 14-22, Jesus is speaking to the church in Laodicea, and He says, 'Listen, you are lukewarm!'

How many of us, just real quick think about this for a second, how many of us would characterize our faith or describe our faith as lukewarm? 'Yeah, not really on fire for God, but you know, I'm just kind of doing life. Just kind of going through life. And I'll approach it as it's convenient...' Jesus calls that lukewarm. The frightening thing is He's speaking to a church, and He says, 'Those of you who are lukewarm, I will vomit you out of My mouth. You make Me gag!' And the words that He follows up and He describes there, Jesus never uses to describe anyone who is saved. And His message to them is 'You are lukewarm. Guess what? You are wretched. You are pitiable. You are poor. You are blind. You are naked. You are not...you think you're good. You're not. You are part of the many, because you are lukewarm. Your life needs to be all about Me! Your life needs to be oriented all around Me. Repent, change, come to an understanding where your whole way of looking at the world is changed. Repent! And if you repent, I will give to you gold refined by fire; I will clothe you; I will help you see. Do this, church of Laodicea!' And there's so much that that church has in common with our culture here today, in Christian churches including ours.

If you would describe your faith as lukewarm I will make this one request of you right here. Tune me out for the whole rest of the sermon. Don't listen to anything else I say, and you work out between you and God, and figure out why it is you're lukewarm. And if you don't want that to be you, I ask that you would repent before God right now. You do business between your heart and His, and you ask Him...you plead for Him to help get you on fire for Him. And you don't do anything else until you get that worked out, 'cause Jesus has some pretty serious words about that. It all goes back to this reality that Jesus is the head, the Lord of the church individually. I'll point this out and I'll just wrap this up, this portion here, with this quote from John Piper. He was speaking about something along these lines and he says,

“Superficial appearances to the contrary, this does not imply that true saints can lose their salvation. That is a clarification I want to make. Nor does it imply that Christ did not die for His elect in a way that is effectual in securing their eternal salvation. It does imply that one can be called a brother on the basis of appearances, but in the end prove not to be a brother because of his failing to persevere in the faith.”

And he goes on, and I'll just put this up here and highlight this. He says,

“We must remember this. There is no standing still in the Christian life. Either we are advancing toward salvation, or we are drifting away to destruction. Obedience is the evidence of faith. [Ok?] Obedience is not what saves you, but obedience is the evidence of faith that alone unites us to Christ, who is our justifying righteousness. Nothing that I have said here contradicts that truth. The elect will love the word of God, the elect will grow, the elect will repent, and the elect most assuredly will be saved.”

Now, if we have a group of people who all acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the head, the Lord of their life, when they come together as a body then by default Jesus will be the head of that body, because everybody's in agreement. Ok, Jesus is the one who determines what I do. Ok, well, when we come together, who should be in charge? Jesus? Right answer. Ok.

With that said, there's five different ways in which...and these are kind of reasons, ways, in which Jesus only further shows that He is the head of the church. And I'll point these out real quickly here. These actually come from a man named, again, Mark Driscoll. It's from that book that I quoted from earlier on, “Repentance”. But there are these five different ways that Jesus alone is the head of the church. First of all, He is...Jesus alone is the apostle who plants the church. Hebrews 3:1 hits at this somewhat. And it indicates this. You can have a church, and it is not a church unless if Jesus planted it, unless if He was instrumental in the beginning, in the birth of that. Otherwise, it's just an organization, it's just a social organization. It's not truly a church. Ok? Jesus is the one who plants the church. He is the apostle who begins it. Ok?

You go on, and second thing...Jesus alone is the leader who builds the church. In Matthew 16:18, for example, Jesus says, 'I will build the church. It's My church, I will build it up.' We mentioned in Peter, where we're living stones, and Jesus is building up the temple. It's this idea that throughout Jesus is putting the people, the pieces, in place that He desires to be there so that the church will glorify Him. Ok? He's the one who builds it. He's the leader of it.

Not only that, but He's the chief shepherd. Another word that you could use there is pastor. Ok? He's the chief...He is the senior pastor who rules the church. He is the senior elder who rules the church. Ok. He is in charge. In 1 Peter 5:4, actually the several verses right around there hit on this, but 1 Peter 5:4 mentions it.

Basically, I don't know if you've realized this, but this is not Larry's church. It's not. He just preaches here sometimes. This is not my church. I just preach here sometimes. This is not your church. If you were the founding family of this, this is not your church. You just happen to have been able to be a part of it. It's Jesus' church, and it exists for His glory. We get to be a part of His church.

There's a fourth thing that I'd say here. Jesus alone is present with the church. He hits on this, for instance, in Matthew 28:18-20, where He says, 'All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore, making disciples of all nations, baptizing them, initiating them into the faith, ok, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey.' Again, there's that theme of obey. You haven't made a disciple and you are not a disciple unless if that is occurring. Just, again, another thought. It's a continual theme. 'Teaching them to obey all I have commanded...and lo, I will be with you always, even to the end of the age.' If our church...if Wasilla Bible Church lasts long enough, and Christ does not return, there will come a day when Larry will no longer be present with Wasilla Bible Church. There will come a day when I will no longer be present with Wasilla Bible Church. There will come a day where no one sitting in this room, no matter how young you are, will currently still be with Wasilla Bible Church...assuming that it lasts long enough and the Lord does not return. Jesus Christ is the only one who consistently, eternally, will be present with the church. He was present with the church two thousand years ago, He is still present with the church. That is why He is the center of everything that we do.

Finally, He alone is the judge of the church. We saw that as an example in Revelation 3 where He judges the church of Laodicea. He alone has the authority to judge and hold us accountable, as a body of believers, for how faithfully we follow His leading. That's an encouraging thing; it's also a very sobering thing, because it means it doesn't matter what anyone else wants to say or think as long as we are in accordance with what Jesus says and thinks. As long as we got that straight, ok. It may stink to have people disagree, but we're in accordance with that. On the flip side it's also very terrifying, because it means there is no one else to whom we can appeal.

That kind of actually takes us to this third big question—why should Jesus be the head? What makes Him so special? And I'll just read in Ephesians 1:15-23. Paul is writing to the church in Ephesus, and he says

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His great might that He worked 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 above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things 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.

Following Paul's thought flow here, he actually gives a very good reason for why Jesus should be the head of the church, individually and corporately. Basically, his reasoning is this; he actually starts it a little bit earlier from where we started reading. It comes to a climax in where we were reading. In verse 7 he says that our redemption comes through Jesus Christ. Redemption is a very...just a very legal, technical term. Basically, Jesus bought you. If you are a true believer, He has bought you. You were enslaved to sin; you were dead in your sins. Jesus bought you with His blood. He paid the sacrifice required to gain your freedom. That means He now owns you. If He owns you He's probably the one in charge. That's just kind of the way it goes. Whoever is...what's that term? Like ownership is like nine-tenths of the law, or whatever, possession or whatever... Basically, if Jesus possesses you, if He owns you, if He has redeemed you, then guess what? He should be your head. Paul goes on and he explains, 'Not only that, but He unites and sustains, He holds together all things.' He keeps everything in existence and He also gives the church the ability to continue to exist. He maintains that level of redemption in you. He is the one who enables you to persist. He is the one who enables you to continue to grow in your faith. He is the one who enables you and empowers you, through the Spirit, to do all that He has set forward for you to do, which Paul develops even more fully in Ephesians 2.

He goes on in verse 20, and then in verse 21, to explain not only did Jesus redeem you (and He did so by His sacrifice), but He was raised up again. He did not stay dead. He came back alive. He was raised, and now He is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven. Jesus is enthroned in heaven. We'll look more at that next week. But the basic summary is 'Listen, Jesus is in the favored position at the Father's right hand, ruling over everything

in heaven and on earth. He is above all rulers, authorities, powers and dominions, now and forever, anyone, anything that ever has existed, anyone, anything that ever does exist, and anyone or anything that will exist.

Two very sobering...or one very sobering truth to that, and one very encouraging truth to that. Sobering...that means that ultimately He is in charge and there is no one else to whom you can appeal. He has complete, total authority. The only question is do you acknowledge it or not. Are you living in rebellion, denying His authority, or are you in submission to Him? Very sobering thought. The encouraging side of it is this...if you are a true believer, if you've been redeemed, if you have placed your trust in Him and you say, 'You know what? I know I'm a sinner. But ultimately I know that You are gracious and you are merciful, and You will forgive me for my sin. You've already paid the debt of my sin. And I know that ultimately Your desire is for me...and this is an awesome thing. Even though I'm a sinner, even though I have been a rebel, I totally...my life is Yours. You can have me. If You want this, have at it...' Man, this is the best deal ever. It's like the man who...he finds a treasure in a yard, in a plot of land, and he realized, he says, 'Man, this is the greatest thing ever.' And he sells everything else. It's not even a question. If you have to question...'I'm not sure if it's a good deal,' then probably you are not yet a believer. Jesus says 'The one who comes to know me is like the guy who finds this in the field, and he says, 'Man, this is...I will sell everything. I will get rid of everything else. No questions asked. Why? Because this is worth it. And this is so amazing.' Yes. If You want me, that's awesome.'

What the Bible tells us is that also we are Christ's inheritance, and we are adopted as children of God. Jesus...His desire in redeeming us is that we will become adopted children of God. As Paul said, 'if we endure we will reign with Him.' His desire is that we will be joint heirs with Him. And we question why in the world He says lukewarmness makes Him sick? He's like, 'What! You think this is worth that?' You're having to sit here and say, 'I don't know...I don't know if it's worth it.' You wonder why it makes Him say, 'Man, this makes Me sick! It makes Me want to vomit. It's like a big hairball in my sandwich. It's nasty!' I mean, seriously, if you can look at it and say, 'I'm not sure if it's worth it,' then you haven't really understood what's at stake, and I would care to venture that you have not experienced Godly repentance, where your whole look on life has been changed and re-altered.

This doesn't mean that we're perfect. What it does mean is that our standard default is when we realize because there is a continual process that's going on, I'm still someone who's in the process of sanctification, I'm slowly becoming more and more like Christ by His grace; but what it means is that our default position is when we realize that my life does match up with what He desires, my default position is ok, I have to change, not Him. I will fit into His desire. I don't expect Him to fit into mine. And I continue progressing in that faith. It's a continual growth, a continual process. But ultimately, Jesus is the head of my life. And when a body of true believers comes together, He's the head of all of us. Which is why, for our church, we focus on the centrality of Christ when we come together.

So what do we do with this? Well, it's pretty simple. Jesus has this expectation that we will give witness to Him and to the reality of His involvement in our lives, both in word and in deed. In deed, the expectation is that if you realize that your life is not matching up in a particular area with something that He desires for you...I don't know what that would be, you can work that out with the Holy Spirit...if your life does not match up, then you turn it over to God and you say, 'Ok, God. I realize that I'm sinning here. I repent. Totally rework the way that I look at everything in life, including this area, and make me more into Your image.' And we go out and we live lives in submission to Christ. In word, what it means is that we give witness to Him not just with our lives, but with our words. We give witness to the truth of Jesus Christ working in our lives, the truth that He says in the Scripture, and we give witness to it and we don't back down from it. Even though that can be a very scary thing. But we're confident that ultimately He is the head of the church. He alone is present with us. And He is seated in authority. And so we can have confidence because we are adopted sons and daughters. And we're confident that when we go before His throne of grace He will give His grace and mercy in time of need, including when we're scared to give witness.

So I'll invite you to stand with me, and we'll close with our prayer of witness, a song asking that God, that Jesus, will do just that; that through the power of His Spirit He'll give us confidence to give witness to the words of Christ, give witness to the one who alone can save.

[Congregation sings the prayer for witness song.]

Thank you, and go in His truth and His grace.