

SERMON V

CHRIST'S PRE-EMINENCE

Tobias Crisp

"That in all things he might have the preeminence." {Col.1:18}

This admirable, sweet, and comfortable Apostle of the Gentiles makes it the master-piece of his Apostleship to woo and win people unto Christ. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." {II Cor.5:20} As in all the rest of his Epistles, so especially in this, and more especially in this 1st chapter, he shows an excellent faculty he hath this way, in this business of wooing people to come to Christ; he observes what most effectually takes with people to beguile their spirits, as he speaks himself, with a kind of craft to catch their affections; especially, if you observe from the 15th verse of this chapter, and so on, you shall find, the Apostle meets with everything that is most enamoring and taking with the people. The world is mightily taken with beauty, with completeness of person; Oh! saith one, let me have a beautiful person, it is no matter how poor; if beauty be so taking, then, saith the Apostle, I will present a rare piece indeed to you, in presenting Christ; for such is the beauty of Christ, that there is no beauty like his; Christ {saith he} is "the image of the invisible God;" which is but one commendation of his. But, will some say, so is every man as well as Christ; what rareness is there in Christ in this regard? It is true, man is after the image of God, but where the Apostle calls Christ "the image of the invisible God," he speaks in an eminent manner; therefore, you shall find him expressing himself more fully, in setting forth the rare beauty of Christ in Hebrews 1:3. "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." Christ is the image of God to the life, as I may say; he is so like him, you cannot know one from the other; he hath so the perfections of God, that there can be nothing more like than he is unto the Father, expressing the brightness of his glory. But there are some, though they find beauty, yet that alone will not take; besides that, some men look for lineage, what stock a person is of; is he come of a good house, of a noble and royal blood? Blood is a great matter, especially with high spirits. Well, if this will take, then there is no stock like of Christ; he is of the greatest house in the world. "The firstborn {saith the Apostle} of every creature;" he comes of that great house, of God himself. ¹

And so doth the creature too, you will say; what rarity is there in Christ above the creatures, for they all come of God. I answer; but, beloved, the creatures are of and in the house of God, as the Apostle speaks of Moses, {Heb.3:5,} "as servants in the house;" "but Christ as a Son." {vs.6} Christ is not only of royal house, but he is born of flint royal house; he is the natural Son of the Father. "This is my beloved Son;" so that he is of the very blood-royal; {as I may so say with reverence} and he is not a younger brother in this house neither, for he is the first-begotten of the house; that is a great matter among persons to marry the heir of a family; so he is. Nay, more than that, he is the only-begotten of the house; there is never another in all the family; and that is a great encouragement, he is "the only-begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth," saith the Apostle. {Jn.1:14} So that if men go all the world over, to find a match in the noblest house, they will never meet with such a one as this of the Son of God. Thus he commends him. But yet some are ready to say, suppose he be of a noble house, he may be in disgrace, and he may live privately, and have no authority, nor be able to do any great matters. If this will do, then the Apostle commends Christ as the rarest, in respect of his

¹{Note: He is the first parent, or bringer forth of every creature into being, as the word will bear to be rendered. Gill.}

power and authority; for "all things were made by him, and for him;" that is, all things in the world are at his command and beck; they bow unto him, they stoop before him; at his name every knee shall bow, both of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and everything goes through his hands.

Yea, but it may be, will some say, he is in disgrace in court, and that is a blur upon him. I answer, No, he is not so great in the country, but he is as great in the court too; for, as he hath the whole world under his power, so he hath the great King at his back; he commands in heaven, as he doth upon earth; there is nothing that he can ask of the Father, but it is answered; he never has a nay; if any come to be suitor to him to put up a petition, he is sure to speed.

But, for all this, he may be but a poor man, though he have never so great power in court and country; and if he be poor, I shall live but poorly with him; if he were rich, and had abundance of wealth, then there were some hope, some encouragement to take such an one. I answer, Christ is not greater in court and country than he is rich in treasure; so you shall find in the 19th verse, "for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." All fulness; all the treasures of wisdom are hid in him; he hath the whole world to dispose of; therefore silver and gold are not to be compared unto him. Yea, but yet there is one thing more; though he hath riches, yet he may prove a niggard, close-fisted, he may keep all to himself; the party that hath him may be poor enough, for want of contribution.

But beloved, he is not more rich himself than he is liberal to contribute of his treasures to make those that are his, sharers to the uttermost of all that he hath. Therefore in chapter 2:10, {for he follows this subject all along,} the Apostle tells us, not only, in verse 9, that "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" but that, "ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." The Head, you know, is not a niggard; what fulness the head hath, it communicates to every part; Christ is a head, and a head of fulness, the fulness of the Godhead. And, as the head is not sparing, but dispersing and scattering all that is in it, so that every member shall have a share; and note, share not merely to keep life and soul together, as we say, but a share to make a man complete; so, if any persons in the world would devise what they could desire in such a one to match themselves unto, you shall find that a creature cannot frame those perfections, in its fancy, which it would enjoy. I say, men cannot frame any perfection to come so near the real perfections of Christ, as a shadow comes near the substance. You have a proverb, that "bachelors' wives and maids' children must be rare creatures;" that is, their fancy will devise what kind of one they will have, and what kinds of perfections they desire. Let the fancy devise what kind of perfection it can, to please sense, Christ shall really out-strip, in perfection, all these fancies, more than a substance doth out-strip a shadow.

Now, the Apostle, having delivered himself thus fully by way of wooing unto Christ, he comes to close in the words of the text; and so declares the end and purpose for which he sets out Christ in so many excellencies as he did; the end of this was, "that in all things he might have the pre-eminence;" that he may be taken for the most excellent thing in the world; that all things may be rejected, rather than he; and he set above everything in the world. So then, the point in brief is this, in regard of the rare excellencies, perfections and usefulness of Christ, which are incomparable, he ought to have the pre-eminence in all things. In handling of which, we shall consider.

First, what the pre-eminence is which Christ ought to have.

Secondly, why he should have the pre-eminence in all these; and then a word or two of application.

First, what is this pre-eminence that Christ should have. I will not insist upon the word pre-eminence; you all know, for to give a person or thing the pre-eminence is no more than this, to set up such a person or thing above all others, and especially for those uses and purposes we have occasion of them for. I say, to choose such a person before any other, as a person who can better and more certainly bring to pass what we desire than any else can. So that in brief, to give Christ the pre-eminence is to set up Christ above all things in the world; to choose Christ, rather than anything, for

every use and purpose to make of him; I say, above and before anything whatsoever, as apprehending him infinitely more able and sufficient unto such purposes than anything else is.

But more particularly, that we might the better see what this pre-eminence is that Christ ought to have; you must know, that there is an infallible pattern drawn out unto us, according unto which we are to write our copy. In general, therefore, the pre-eminence we are to give unto Christ is the pre-eminence that the Father hath given unto him before us, and revealed unto us, that we may, in our way, give the same to him; therefore, we must consider a while what pre-eminence the Father gives unto Christ. You shall find that the Father in many things infinitely sets up Christ above all things in the world; for he chose Christ before all things in the world. For instance; first, the Father gives Christ the pre-eminence of his affections, his love and his delight. There is nothing in the world that the Father loves and delights in, as he doth in his Son. All the delight the creatures have from the Father are but beams from the sun of righteousness, in the eyes of God. That Christ hath more abundance of the Father's love, than any creature in the world hath, I will give you but one passage or two, for the clearing of it. Look into Proverbs 8:30 & 31. By the way, you must note, first, that wisdom, spoken of in this chapter, is generally understood by all to be Christ alone; and that which is indeed affirmed of wisdom, can be affirmed of none but Christ. Among other particulars, note these two, to manifest it is Christ, and that he hath that choice affection of the Father. "I was set up {saith Wisdom here} from everlasting, from the beginning." {8:23} I was set up from everlasting; none was everlasting but the Father to set him up; none could be everlasting but the Sun to be set up. All creatures had their beginning and being in time. Now, observe the affection of the Father in this; "I was set up from everlasting;" it doth properly set forth the nature of pre-eminence. Wisdom speaks of many things; God did lay the foundations of the earth, made the sea, and several creatures; but "I was set up from everlasting;" as much as if he should say, these have their place in the world, but my place is above them, in the affection of God. And, that this setting up is meant of God's affection to Christ above any creature in the world, mark what he speaks in verse 30, "then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;" the meaning is, Christ is here considered as the darling of the Father. All the creatures in the world are brought up by God, in a large sense; but he was brought up with him, that is to say, he was the very fondling of him. When Abraham had an Isaac, Isaac must be brought up with Abraham, and Ishmael must be sent abroad; Ishmael shall have a portion, but shall not be brought up with him. This shows the difference of affection to one before the other. Bringing up with him as an argument of affection; "I was brought up with him, I was daily his delight." God made the creatures, but Christ was his only delight; that is, he could not look upon any creature in the world, and delight in it; but this delight he had in his Son, did swallow up the delight he had in any creature. In brief, the love and delight of the Father hath such a pre-eminence in the Son, that the truth is, there is no creature in the world that doth actually participate of one jot of the love of the Father, but by the Son, and for the Son's sake; as the Son becomes the channel, or rather the spring, that receives from the ocean of God's love. That love the creature participates of, it participates of it by Christ; for you know that when we partake of sweet streams that run in rivers and channels, we are beholden to the spring for the stream; and what the spring receives, that it conveys to the channel from the ocean. The heart of God, as I may so speak, is the ocean, the first rise of all love to the creature; Christ is the spring that first receives from him, and then through him is all love diffused to the creature. {I Jn.4:19}

You know that by nature we are children of wrath, subjects of the hatred and displeasure of God, being at enmity with God; how do we partake of God again? "God is in Christ, {saith the text,} reconciling the world unto himself;" so that this uniting again to the Father, in the participating of the love of the Father, comes again in Christ. "You that sometimes were afar off, hath he made nigh by the blood of Christ;" afar off, in respect of the affection of God, in regard of our sinful nature; but made nigh, that is, reduced again into the affection of God by the blood of Christ.² Here is the pre-

² {Note: This must be understood, as the Doctor explains it, of the open participation and enjoyment of the love of God, and not of the secret love of God, and the cause and origin of it; which is his own sovereign will, and not the blood of Christ. Gill.}

eminence of Christ above the creature, he hath infinitely more of affection; he is the spring and fountain of that affection that the creature partakes of. Now then, we are to give this preeminence unto Christ, that reveals this unto us, that so we may see the pattern according to which we are to walk, and do likewise. We should, so make Christ the choicest in our affection; we can never place love and affection more orderly, than by placing affection according to the pattern God sets; so far as we affect according to God and imitate him in affecting, so far are our affections placed aright; to put the cart before the horse; to affect things of lower degree above things that are higher; to give preeminence to things that should come behind, and to bring that behind that should have pre-eminence, is the disorder of man's affection; it swerves from the pattern and example of God himself. So then, Christ hath the pre-eminence over all persons with us; when he is really promoted and exalted above all creatures in the world in our affection. "Whom have I in heaven but thee;" saith Asaph; and "I desire nothing in the earth in comparison of thee." {Ps.73:25} Here is the pre-eminence of affection given unto Christ, when there is nothing in the world in the affection comparable unto him. You shall see the like in the Canticles, 5:9,10, the church discoursing about her beloved, the strangers ask her, "what is thy beloved more than another beloved?" She answers, "my beloved is the chiefest among ten thousand." Here is the pre-eminence ascribed. When the people of Israel heard David say, he would go to war, they fell upon him with "thou art more worth than ten thousand of us." Here was the pre-eminence given to the king. So, I say, when in affection Christ is promoted as the chief among ten thousands; nay, let all things in the world be set with Christ, they are trash to him; then, I say, is given real pre-eminence unto Christ, when, in affection, in regard of the excellencies of Christ, he is set above everything in the world.

Secondly, the Father gives Christ this pre-eminence besides; namely, in a far more enlarged and multiplied proportion of gifts and parts above all creatures. Christ is the Benjamin of his Father, whose inheritance is more than five times as much as all the rest of the brethren. The Apostle tells us that "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name;" {Phil.2:9;} and in Hebrews, that he hath anointed his Christ "with the oil of gladness above his fellows." {Heb.1:9} You shall find that God promotes Christ even above angels; as in Hebrews 1 & 2 which insists mainly upon this point, in how many respects God exalts Christ above angels. "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" {1:5} But, I say, principally in respect of parts and gifts, you shall find that that which God bestows upon Christ, is far more than he bestows upon any creature. In John 3:34, it is said that "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him;" we receive drop by drop of that we have; we have it but scanty, to that which Christ hath; he hath received the Spirit not by measure. The truth is, Christ receives a proportional gift as head; now a head not only requires to have what should supply itself of spirit; but such a proportion as is sufficient to supply all the parts, from the head to the foot; therefore, it must needs have more than the several parts themselves; we need no more than for our own sustenance. Christ is our Head, and therefore as a head must have the pre-eminence; that is, a larger proportion of gift's than others; for others are but to find for themselves, but he is to maintain himself, and to maintain the whole body too. Thus should we give Christ the pre-eminence, to which the Father hath exalted him above creatures, giving unto him more than unto creatures; nay, giving unto creatures all they have by him; I say, so should we give him the pre-eminence likewise. Whither should a creature go for water, but unto the spring? Whither should the creature go for strength, but unto the fountain of strength? Is it not derogation unto Christ that all fulness should be in him alone, and we forsake this fountain of fulness to go unto broken cisterns that will hold no water? Mark it well, as often as ever you run to any creature in any necessity or exigency, either before you go to Christ, or instead of going to Christ; so often you rob Christ of that pre-eminence that God hath given unto him, and you should give unto him. If any creature in the world seem in your fancy to have a helpfulness, a likelihood of strength, and of supply; and this likelihood of supply seems more likely than one from Jesus Christ; so far is the pre-eminence of Christ brought down, and the creature hath gotten a pre-eminence above him. Look to it, beloved, while you run to the creature, to the world, for this, and that, and the other thing, and think it must come this way, or it will never come, Christ is wholly

neglected of you; and you that are of a more spiritual strain, that when you are under any trial, run to any grace, or temper of spirit in you, or any qualifications, or any performances you can tender; and look after them, as the thing that most likely will furnish you with what you want, while you look faintly and coldly upon Christ, and the freeness of that grace that Christ brings alone with himself; so long you deny unto Christ the pre-eminence of those parts and gifts God hath given unto him above other things. If God hath given unto any creatures more than unto Christ, you might rather have sought unto them than unto Christ; you might more properly look and wish for supply in them than in Christ; but if Christ hath more than any creature in the world; nay, if Christ be made the sole and only fountain of supply, whether for the spirits or the outward man; then must he have this preeminence to be sought unto rather than anything in the world, for the furnishing of you, and supplying you with that, that must come from this Fountain.

Thirdly, the Father gives Christ this pre-eminence to be the foundation to bear up all things; as the Apostle tells us, "other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ," {I Cor.3:11;} and in Hebrews 1:3, speaking of Christ as "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power;" God then gives, to Christ this pre-eminence to be the Foundation. The creature therefore robs Christ of his pre-eminence, when Christ must not be the foundation to bear up all things, but other foundations shall be laid; as if there were a firmer or securer bottom to bear up than Christ himself. In Isaiah 28:16, you shall see what pre-eminence the Father gives unto Christ as the foundation. "Behold, {saith he,} I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." Peter hath an addition hereunto, in I Peter 2:4, "to whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." Christ an elect, precious stone, a living stone. Mark what pre-eminence he hath given to Christ, to be such a kind of foundation to uphold all things.

To give a touch of these things; first, he is a stone, the firmest bottom in the world, for the security of that which is laid upon it from sinking; give Christ this pre-eminence too. Beloved, look unto him, and consider him as a stone, an immoveable rock; such a rock as you may sit down with this confidence; that though heaven and earth shake and come together, whatsoever is laid upon him shall never totter. He is a "tried stone," saith the text; that is, more than barely a stone. You know what pre-eminence those medicines have that have *probatum est* {it is tried or proved} over-written; that is an approved medicine, and, upon trial, found to be good. You know what pre-eminence that armour of proof hath, when a musket is discharged upon it, and the bullet pierces it not; this is of pre-eminence above others. Christ is "a tried stone;" there is a *probatum est* written over the head of this stone; he was tried by the Father, he is tried by believers, he is tried by his enemies; and a *probatum est* is written over his head, that he is a stone with a witness, tried by the Father, first, in his secret council; he found that nothing in the world could stand under that business which was to be done; he was tried by him on earth, as "he made the iniquities of us all to meet on him," {Isa.53:6,} and yet they could not make his back to break; here he was tried, he made him a butt for all his wrath, the whole quiver of his envenomed arrows; yet he stood to it; he was tried by believers; they have put him to it to the utmost; he is tried by his very enemies, who find him a grindstone to grind them to powder; bulwark of security for all such whom they oppose.

Christ is not only a tried stone, but "a precious tried stone," saith the Apostle, that is more; he gives him this pre-eminence, to be a precious stone. You know, when the Holy Ghost sets forth the glory of the church in the Revelations, under the name and title of such and such precious stones, of which the foundation, the gates, and the walls were made, it is set forth in way of excellency, that they are precious stones; here, I say, is pre-eminence, that Christ is a precious stone, as well as a tried stone; precious to God, nothing so delectable as what he doth; precious to believers, precious in respect of beauty; {no beauty like his;} precious in respect of his value; nothing of worth comparable to him; "the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul," "thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil," {Mic.6:7,} come not near in value to the ransom of the soul; but Christ hath ransomed it, and is raised from the grave. All the creatures in the world, gathered up together, could never make up a sum to buy out the soul; therefore Christ is precious, precious in value and worth; all receipts in the

world spend out their virtue, and are dry things, to the virtue and excellency of Christ; such is the virtue that is found in Christ, that let him but come and lay his mouth to the foot, where the thorn is, he draws out the thorn; nay, he lays his mouth to the plague sore of the soul, and he sucks out the venom; {Num.21:8,9 with Jn.3:14,15} it is true, he drinks his own bane, for the present, it costs him his life; but he sucks out the poison from the person that makes use of him. There are many precious stones, they say, that are of admirable virtue, but yet none is compared unto Christ.

He is "a sure foundation," saith the prophet, that is more; not only precious, but sure; so sure, that lay what load you can lay upon the back of Christ, he stoops not; and, therefore, he was excellently typified by those brazen pillars in Solomon's temple; for they were made of brass, on purpose to show their strength, whereon the whole weight of the porch of the temple lay. Christ hath this pre-eminence given unto him of the Father, that although an infinite weight were to be imposed upon him, yet he should go away with all. And in this regard, Sampson was a type of him, who, being barred up in the city among the Philistines, takes the gates of the city, and carries them up into a mountain, and there lays them; he is so "sure a foundation," that lay the load of all the sins you ever committed; lay the load of all the sins of all the people that shall be saved by him, yet he stoops not; these break him not, he will carry them away as easily as Samson the gates; add to that, the load of all your duties and performances, and businesses in the world; lay all upon Christ, he will do all for you. But, must not we do them; ye will say? Yea, he will do them for you, and in you; first, he will do them for you, namely, in fulfilling all righteousness in his own person, which he presents to his Father, as that righteousness whereby believers shall be justified before the Father. As he doth all for them, so he doth all righteousness in them. Your duties are as the duty you do to a deceased friend; you think it is the last duty you shall do for him, to carry him to the grave; though you may have bearers, you shall go under the corpse, but the bearers shall have all the weight upon their shoulders, so that you go easy, in respect of the assistance of the bearers; all the duties we have to do, may seem weighty; this is a hard saying, and that is a hard saying, who can obey it? But know, that the Lord Christ is such a pillar, such a bearer, to take all the weight of duties upon his back, that he carries the burden; and so carries it, that you shall go but as the friend of the corpse, the burden shall be off from your shoulders. In all duties God calls for of any person, the strength of Christ is made perfect in the weakness of him that is to do them. Christ takes not men simply from doing, but he takes away the heaviness and the task. We look upon duties as a yoke and a burden; but mark what Christ saith, "take my yoke, for it is easy; and my burden, for it is light." How can this be, that it should be a yoke, and yet easy; a burden, and yet light? It is a yoke and burden in itself to any person that carries all himself, without Christ; but easy and light when Christ bears the weight of it. Again, add to this, that Christ is so sure a foundation, that, besides duties, lay all your burdens upon him, for his back is broad enough to sustain all; the burden of your spirits, the burden of your outward man, all the burdens of the church in general, while she is under the greatest calamities; Christ, I say, is a sure foundation to bear all these; to bear the burden of all the cares of all the people of God. "Cast your care upon him, for he cares for you," saith the Apostle. Finally, Christ is a sure foundation; commit all your comforts unto Christ, he will uphold all your comforts, for he will renew them and enlarge them.

Besides, Christ is an elect stone, singled out by God himself, for this very office, in respect of his excellency and usefulness, to have the pre-eminence. And as he is elected unto it; this imports, it is God's own act that Christ should have such a pre-eminence, to be the foundation. Besides, as it is the act of God, so there is a certainty that God himself must be drawn dry, before Christ shall, or be left any jot unable to do that which is imposed upon him. Look, therefore, what God himself, in heaven is able to do, as he is God; all this is Christ made able to do, by him that sends him about this employment; so that he must be spent, before Christ shall be dry. If a father hath a child, that he prizes as his own life, a slave in the gallies, he will send the ransom of his son to the gallies; he will spend all that ever he hath, rather than his son shall not be redeemed. There is no wise man sends a servant about any employment in the world, but he furnishes him thoroughly to dispatch that business about which he sends him; it is a vain thing for a master to send a servant for five pounds worth of anything, and not give him so much money. Doth God send Christ into the world to redeem sinners, to

sustain the burden of sins, and not furnish him to do the work he sends him about? He might as well have kept him at home, if he did not furnish him thoroughly, that he might dispatch it.

Finally, Christ hath such a pre-eminence, as to be a living-stone, and such a living-stone, as makes all stones living that come near him. Here is the pre-eminence Christ hath; of the loadstone, you observe, all iron or steel that comes near it, it draws all to it, and communicates of its own virtue, to the iron it draws; this is, most like to Christ; for Christ is such a loadstone, that he draws many after him; and, as he draws them after him, so he communicates his own virtue to them; so that now, as he is a living-stone, he communicates life to them, though they were dead in sin; and not only so, but he communicates a power to them, to make other things lively. You have an observation, when once a knife is touched with a loadstone, it will draw another; it is most certain Christ hath this virtue to draw souls to himself, and when he draws them, they partaking of life from him, he gives unto them to be instruments of life unto others. "When thou art converted {saith Christ to Peter,} strengthen thy brethren." Now, seeing Christ hath all this pre-eminence given unto him by the Father, to be such a foundation to bear up all things, let us give him this pre-eminence to lay all upon him, and not upon anything else whatsoever; and so far as we do lay all upon "this stone, this tried stone, this precious corner stone, this sure foundation, this elect corner stone, this living stone;" so far as we will venture all upon him, we so far give him the pre-eminence; but, if he will be setting defenses to the house that is built upon a rock, what is this but a disparagement to the foundation? If the foundation be firm and good, wherefore then served defenses? It is apparent the house will sink, when it cannot stand alone without them; so far as you set up any props unto Christ the foundation, that is to bear up all by himself, so far you disparage Christ; so far you bring him down, and give him not the pre-eminence. I see the time steals away. There are many particulars, wherein I should show you how you may give the pre-eminence unto Christ. But I must hasten.

Consider, briefly, why should Christ have the pre-eminence? Why should not other things sit cheek-by-jole with him?³ I answer, because it is the good will and pleasure of the Father that he should have the pre-eminence. What is the reason Joseph must be the chief man in Egypt? Pharaoh will have it so. What is the reason that Mordecai must be led through the city with pomp and triumph, and Haman lead the horse, when Mordecai was counted a slave to Haman? Why, King Ahasuerus will have it so. And, if God will have it so, it must be so; if there were no other reason, but God the Father's will, we, that are subjects, should yield to the Father his own will, and give that honour to him, whom he will honour. What shall be done to the man whom the King delights to honour? "Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head; and let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour." {Est.6:8,9} As much as to say, those the king honours, the people must honour with him; so, if God the Father will honour the Son with a pre-eminence upon earth, his will must be a Law to us; we must honour him with that pre-eminence, because he will have it so.

Secondly, Christ must have the pre-eminence above all other things in the world, as he is born unto it; he is heir of all things. You know, it is the right of the heir to have the inheritance, or, a double portion above his brethren; Christ, therefore, being the heir of the world, the first begotten of the Father; nay, the only Son; it starts with nature, he should have the pre-eminence above a younger brother.

Thirdly, Christ hath bought this pre-eminence; he hath paid for it to the uttermost value of it. He that buys a lordship, it is fit he should be lord of the manor; it is not fit any inferior tenant should be above him, as long as he hath purchased and given a price for it; Christ hath purchased this pre-eminence, and he paid the Father the uttermost farthing. "He beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied" with it; and therefore he ought to have it.

³ {Note: Side by side, or in equality with him. Gill.}

Fourthly, Christ ought to have the pre-eminence of all things, in that he alone is able to manage this pre-eminence. You know there are many favourites in States sometimes, that have the doing of all businesses of state, in respect of the favour of the prince; but the state comes to ruin, and they also, if they be not able to manage the state. If any creature in the world should have the pre-eminence given to him to manage all affairs in the world, but Christ himself; certainly, it would prove to the world, as the poet feigned it did by the son of Phoebus, that went about to drive the chariot of the sun; Phoebus could manage the same in order; but Phaeton, a novice, a stripling, an ignorant fellow, comes in; he steps up to rule the sun, and the whole world is set on fire; I say, it would be so at least with the world, if any creature should have the pre-eminence to manage the affairs of it. Look to the wisest man in the world and most able to manage the affairs of the world; yet he hath so many irons in the fire, some of them burn for want of looking to; therefore, Christ should have the pre-eminence, because he can go through stitch with whatever business he undertakes.

Fifthly, Christ should have the pre-eminence in all things, because he hath best deserved it at our hands; we usually honour those people to whom we are most bound; according to the kindness received, so is our exalting of the person. Now, what creature in the world comes near to Christ in loving kindness and desert at our hands? Where had we been, had not Christ stepped in between us and the Father to make peace with the Father for us? Oh; what a fearful account should we have come unto at the great tribunal of the Lord, had not Christ beforehand cancelled all that God could charge us withal, and blotted out our transgressions, and presented us without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing in the sight of God. In Christ you live, move, and have your being; by him you have access to the throne of grace, through a new and living way; all you have, and all that you are, all that you hope for hereafter, comes only from this fountain, this Christ, who hath purchased all of the Father for you. If any creature in the world can do these things for you, let the creature be exalted above him; but if he leave all the creatures of the world behind, and out-strip them, good reason there is, according to his desert, that he should have the preeminence. The Apostle, considering the infinite desert of Christ to be exalted by men, breaks out into this vehement expression, "if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha;" that is, let him be accursed with a great curse. {I Cor.16:22} So deserves this Christ at the hands of man.

Now for application of it; is it Christ's due to have the pre-eminence? Then bring down everything that exalts itself above Christ; rear and set up the thrown-down and dejected Christ in you; you that have exalted the world, and made it your god, bring down, this idol, grind it to the dust, set up the Lord Christ; if you will have anything in the world, let Christ hear of it. When men would have anything of a king, they never go to the scullion in the kitchen, but to the favourite, by whom the king hath declared he will deliver things. When the people came to Pharaoh, he sends them to Joseph, as Joseph said, he would do; so, I say to you, would you have anything of God, go to Christ, go by Christ to him. If you come in any other name in the world, if God answers you in that you would have, he answers you with a curse. "This is my beloved Son, hear him;" as he will direct you, so you shall speed; if Christ say, your sins are forgiven, they shall be forgiven; if Christ will make a deed of gift to you; of liberty from bondage, of grace, or of glory; if Christ hath once past the deed, the Father will underwrite to it and subscribe it. "If the Son make you free, then are you free indeed;" for "of his fulness we do receive grace for grace." In John 17:2, it is said that the Father "hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." As you will have these things, go to Christ; if you go anywhere else in the world, but to Christ, you shall go without; they are to be had nowhere else. God hath given Christ the pre-eminence; he must rule all, he must determine, and the Father will yield. The Father hath given all judgment to the Son, and he himself will judge no man. The government is laid upon his shoulders; therefore you must go where God sends you, if you will speed for anything of him.

Learn of Christ more, let Christ be the Alpha and Omega; in all things, begin in Christ, end in Christ; do all by Christ, get all by Christ. But must not we serve in duty, will you say? I answer, ye must serve in duty and obedience, but look not that that duty should bring anything; it is Christ brings everything you get; you get nothing by duties; assure yourselves, while you look to get by that you

do, you will but get a knock; because of so much sinfulness in the duty; but if you will have any good, you must get it by Christ; your duties you perform, are that wherein you are to walk in the world, and before the world, that you may be profitable to men; but as for getting anything, assure yourselves, while your labour to get by duties, you provoke God, as much as lies in you, to punish you for such presumption, if not for the filthiness of the things you perform.

And as you must bring everything down that exalts itself above Christ; so you must set Christ above everything; know, this will be "the great condemnation, that light," that is Christ, "is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light;" they love to run to other things, and to forsake the light; this will be the condemnation. So far as Christ is slighted, and other things promoted above him, so far you take away the great end for which Christ was sent into the world, which was that he might have the pre-eminence in all things.