

The Lord of All

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A few days ago, Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud, known as MbS, visited Korea. He stayed at a hotel, and during his stay, he booked the hotel's all rooms, which are over 400 rooms. The personnel accompanying him must have used some of them, but many rooms were probably left unused. It was a symbolic act to show his power and wealth.

One of the reasons he came to Korea was to make contracts with Korean companies for a city being built. The city's name is Neom, a combination of Neo and the M in *Mustaqbal*, the Arabic word for future. Then, Neom means "New Future," and as the name suggests, this city will use all kinds of cutting-edge technologies. They say the smart city will use only renewable and eco-friendly energy. Also, the plan includes flying taxis and helper AI robots. They plan to make walls of 105 miles with 1700 feet tall buildings along the Red Sea coast that might accommodate 9 million people. The project has an estimated cost of \$500 billion.

Therefore, the heads of many Korean companies, including Samsung and Hyundai, met the Crown Prince and gathered in one place by adjusting their schedules to discuss the plan and make deals for it. In a piece of TV news, I saw Samsung chairman Jay Lee, known as the richest man in Korea, get out of his car and enter the conference hall. He seemed very nervous and hurried. He usually smiled and strolled when he met someone else. But as he entered the building, he kept a straight face and moved with quick steps. It may not be appropriate to speculate on too much from a brief clip on the news, but to me, it was an unusual display of his "humility" as he met someone much wealthier than him, whom he rarely had the chance to meet.

We usually have a humble attitude in front of someone who has what we value. Some people take a lower-than-usual stance in front of people with money or power. Others admire people who have a lot of information or knowledge. However, some people express their most tremendous respect when they meet someone who sacrifices themselves for others, and practices love with their lives rather than those who have made successes from a worldly perspective. Now, I want to ask you to whom you give your greatest attention, respect, admiration, and love.

In the history of the church, countless people confessed Jesus Christ as the Lord of their lives and lived a life of following Jesus. Paul was one of those people who met Jesus most dramatically and then accepted Jesus as the Lord. Therefore, for him, the Most Valuable Person, the MVP, was Jesus Christ. And for Paul, Christ's Lordship was so supreme that it could not be compared to anything else. Paul realized that Jesus Christ, whom he had persecuted, was the Messiah sent by God to this world to achieve Divine salvation.

The realization must have shocked him at first. From his human perspective, Jesus, a carpenter in Nazareth, was a person without wealth, power, or knowledge. From his understanding, Jesus could never have been the Messiah. Jesus' conditions and background were much worse than those of Paul. How can someone serve someone weaker than them as a lord? However, his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus completely changed his mind. He eventually understood that Jesus, who looked much inferior to himself, is God who came to the world and was exalted as the Lord of all. Paul, who always had an arrogant attitude before the name of Jesus, now humbles himself before it more than anyone else. The heart that gives up and puts down our own views, beliefs, and habits in front of God's truth leads us to the righteousness of God. Faith, which leads us to God's salvation, means having a humble heart before the Lord.

However, Satan, who suffered a fatal blow to the head by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, still tries to deceive us. Satan's strategy is to make us somehow deny the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Christ's victory over death was already accomplished, but the enemy sets traps to let us fall on the road to salvation, making us not believe in it. The deceiver leads people to use different methods. Some people reject the historicity of Jesus. They say that a young man named Jesus, who died on the cross, never existed historically. Some claim that Jesus did not actually die on the cross but rather fled to another region, got married, and had children, as in *The Da Vinci Code*. Many people are persuaded by these claims to deny the historicity of Jesus or his resurrection.

But a more subtle deception of the enemy is to deny the Lordship of Jesus while admitting his greatness. Satan lets us say that Jesus is a great teacher who performed many miracles and preached the word and gospel of God but deceives us that we need something or someone other than Jesus to obtain God's salvation. So, many cults we know of do not completely deny Jesus. They say Jesus was a great prophet, the Son of God, or even our Lord.

However, they add some deceptive words: “However, Jesus’ work somehow fell short of achieving God’s complete salvation. So, God gives us another way or another savior. Also, because this is what God has secretly given only to us, we can participate in God’s salvation only through us.” But this is a lie that Paul wants to refute.

The false shepherds who led the Israelites into idolatry and corruption also did similar things at the time of Jeremiah. They claimed that other gods besides Jehovah could make them live a prosperous and peaceful life on the land. They asserted that Yahweh, who led the war in the wilderness to victory, was a great god. But for farming in Canaan and enjoying abundance, they insisted, the Hebrews had to believe in Baal and Ashtaroth, who could bring rain and plentifulness. And the shepherds also convinced the people that it is natural and OK to do “a little” harm to others for their own sake. But the Lord declares these acts as “evil doings.”

Attempts to deny the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the power of salvation by Christ have existed since the Early Church. The Colossian church also faced such a challenge. Paul did not found the Colossian church. However, Paul wanted to teach them because his beloved disciple Epaphras founded the church, and he heard about them. The false teachers who denied the completeness of salvation through Jesus and his Lordship infiltrated the church and made turmoil among them. The heretic preachers alleged Jesus was just a pretty good teacher, so they needed something else to be saved.

Paul mentions the contents of their teachings in chapter 2. First, the false shepherds emphasized the aspect of Jewish legalism and demanded circumcision, purification regulations, and observance of Jewish festivals. (2:16-17) They were also obsessed with experiencing mystical visions and taught angel worship. (2:18-19) And the deceiving teachers defined the human flesh as evil and preached ascetic teachings that salvation could be achieved by afflicting the body. (2:20-22) Through these teachings, they were gradually undermining the integrity of salvation through Christ. When Paul heard such news while in prison in Rome, he could not remain silent. He hastened to write and send the letter to them.

In today's text, Paul eagerly defends the Lordship of Jesus Christ by dividing it into two parts. First, through verses 15-17, Paul declares that Jesus is the very Lord of creation. "For in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, ... —all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him, all things hold together." Through this bold declaration, Paul reveals that Jesus is the Maker who participated in the creation. In Jesus, all creation was made; without Christ, everything loses its foundation and value. Paul affirms that salvation through Jesus is full and complete.

Second, through verses 18-20, Paul proclaims that Jesus is the Lord of the new creation. "He is... the firstborn from the dead... and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross." Human sinfulness has created an insurmountable separation between God and creation. However, through Jesus Christ, God has accomplished Divine reconciliation. Jesus is now the Lord of new life who has overcome even death, the wages of sin. The Lord of life can give hope of new life even to the dead. Thus, Jesus is Lord of all things: visible and invisible, living and dead, first world and new creations.

As promised to God's people through the prophet Jeremiah, God raised up the descendant of David, Jesus Christ, to be our eternal King, and through him, God's justice and righteousness have already been accomplished in us. (Jeremiah 23:5) This week is the last week of the Christian year, in which we proclaim that Jesus Christ is our King. Also, we give thanks for everything the King has done for us as we celebrate Thanksgiving Day. Sometimes our lives come with rough winds and angry waves, but if our souls focus on Jesus, our eternal King and the Lord of all, I believe it is well in our souls. It is not MbS (Mohammed bin Salman) or any other creature we must meet today with humility. Let us declare that our MVP is our Savior, Jesus Christ, the Lord of all. As we praise God and give thanks to the Lord with our humble hearts, the Triune God will be our justice, and in any troubles, our Lord will provide us with hope and the way to God's deliverance.