

Warroad Baptist Church
Sept. 21, 2008

“The Supremacy and All-Sufficiency of Jesus Christ”
(An Introduction to the book of Colossians)

Scripture: Co 1:15-20

Read : Co 1:15-20

Illustration: “Actions of Christ” – Source unknown; “In Christ We Have” – Source unknown

He came from splendor to be born in poverty. He left the presence of angels, for the company of men. He laid down a scepter in heaven to be laid in a manger of hay, and exchanged the worship of Arch-angels, for the praise of lowly shepherds.

He walked into the world with all the power of Almighty God at his bidding, but he was carried out a mutilated body lowered from a cross.

He rebuked the pious, but he comforted the sinner. He refused earthly Kingship, although he was still a King. He loved his mother yet gave her away at the Cross. He healed the broken-hearted, yet he himself, died with a broken heart.

He loved the fellowship of friends, yet was cast out by his kinsmen. He rebuked both sage and seer, then blessed the little children. He held an executive meeting on the Mount of Transfiguration, then wept alone in the Garden of Gethsemane.

He could walk on water, but could not walk away from the tears in the eyes of the Widow from Nain. He could command the stars in their orbits, but he refused to change the circumstances of his own execution. His mission was a commitment to free all men, yet he was imprisoned on the testimony of one man.

He delivered many from pain, but he was delivered to suffer agonizing pain. He dried the eyes of multitudes, but no one dried his eyes in Gethsemane. He carried the burdens of the world, but only one was brought forth to help him bear his Cross to Calvary.

His execution was thought to be insignificant, but became the controversy of the ages. His life was extinguished in a brief second of time, but then ignited to lighten the world. His short span of thirty-three years on Earth should have passed unnoted were it possible, but no one life has ever had such impact on the minds of men.

His three and one-half years in the public’s eye was brief indeed, but his achievements are the greatest ever recorded.

He has inspired more men, conquered more hearts, delivered more prisoners, consoled more mourners, than any figure in the history of man. He spoke of love, but was murdered with hate. He shared all that he had, then on the Cross...he shared paradise with a thief. He gave the World light, only to be driven into the cavern of Death. He gave mankind guidance, only to be guided to Golgotha. He pointed men to the Tree of Life, they nailed him to a tree on a hill called the Skull. He laid down a scepter in heaven, to be laid in a borrowed tomb.

He walked out of heaven, pure, perfect, and beautiful. He returned beaten, mutilated, and nail scarred. he fulfilled all that was written of him, and yet man did not believe Him. His coming changed the course of nations, his return will be to judge the nations. His title was simple as stated on the Cross, “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews,” but to those who have ever known him, He is Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.

In Christ we Have:

- A love that can never be fathomed
- A life that can never die
- A righteousness that can never be tarnished
- A peace that can never be understood
- A rest that can never be disturbed

- A joy that can never be diminished
- A hope that can never be disappointed
- A glory that can never be clouded
- A light that can never be darkened
- A purity that can never be defiled
- A beauty that can never be marred
- A wisdom that can never be baffled
- Resources that can never be exhausted.

Prayer:

I'd like to draw your attention for a moment to the **Horizontal Chart** that you'll find inserted in your bulletin. This is my attempt to capture the contents of this incredible book of the Bible that brings out "The Supremacy and All-Sufficiency of Jesus Christ"

Paul's ministry vision was to present everyone perfect or complete in Christ (1:28).

The first half of this letter is doctrinal in nature and the second half involves the practical application of what was being taught. We fall short of God's intention for the truths He reveals to us in the Bible when we don't live out our lives on the basis of His truth.

I'll be following this outline on the Sunday mornings that I'm filling the pulpit until we've worked our way through the book of Colossians. This will give you an idea of where we're headed and what you can expect me to be preaching on.

Pastor Virgle mentioned last Sunday that it's appropriate for pastors to recommend good books from the pulpit and I'd like to do that right now, in fact, the book that I'm recommending is the greatest book ever written in the history of mankind. It has sold more copies, has been translated into more languages and has been more widely distributed than any other book known to man – the Bible. Now I'm not suggesting, since you may have a Bible that you are really comfortable with, that you run out and purchase this one, but in my opinion, the NIV 30th Anniversary edition Study Bible is one of the finest Bibles available today.

Good books are expensive and it makes sense to get the best value you can for the money you spend. The reason I like the NIV 30th Anniversary edition Study Bible is that is contemporarily relevant linguistically, and is an accurate translation of the original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. It has the largest concordance ever bound with an English Bible. The study notes doctrinally reflect traditional evangelical theology - it's like have a commentary on every book of the Bible right within your Bible. In addition, this 30th Anniversary edition that has just been released, has a Topical index of subjects that bring together the most significant Biblical passages that are related to them. It's like getting 4 reference tools for the price of one and all in one volume. You can purchase an NIV 30th Anniversary Study Bible – Custom Edition Genuine Leather for \$44.99 from Christian Book Distributors, Christian Book.com and it's free shipping.

In introducing the book of Colossians I'm going to give you the general gist of each chapter and then elaborate on the contents. It's going to take next Sunday as well to complete this introduction.

In the first Chapter, Paul identifies his intended audience, draws a verbal portrait of Jesus Christ, and goes on to describe his commitment to communicating God's truth to them in all its fullness to the end that they become complete in Christ.

In chapter 2, Paul lays out what is essentially a defense of the faith, an apologetic if you will against the false teaching that was going on aimed at discrediting the Gospel, denying the deity of Jesus Christ, and derailing the Colossian believers' freedom in Christ.

Chapter 3 concerns appropriate Christian conduct in a believer's life in general, as well as in the home and in the workplace.

And in the final chapter Paul asks for prayer for opportunities to share the Gospel with others, to tell them what was happening where he was, to send greetings from his companions in ministry, and to encourage them to communicate with other local area churches.

In a world where change is the order of the day with rapid advancements in technology, scientific discoveries and ever-changing philosophies of life, there is one unchanging reality and that is the relentless pursuit of people looking for answers to how our world came into being, why we're here, what life is all about and how to find real meaning and fulfillment in life.

People are looking for: what works, not what's true, what their rights are, not what is right, what will make them happy, not living for the greater good of others, everything is relative, there are no absolutes, all religions are of equal value, everyone has the right to believe and to do whatever they want and no one has the right to tell them otherwise.

Deep down when all is said and done, what people *truly* long for is meaningful and fulfilling relationships with those who matter most to them.

Absolutely nothing in your life is to rival the place you give Jesus Christ in importance - He's to have first place in everything. Period.

The sin that so *easily* entangles us (He 12:1) is believing God isn't enough for us and we need more. This has been the case ever since Ge 3. Don't fall for this ... again!

The way you live and treat those around you is a reflection of your heart and your attitude toward God. If you truly love God, then you'll truly love others.

God, people and the Word of God are the only eternal realities of life. Everything else is temporal. That's a big clue to what's most important in life. Where do each of these fit in your life?

Too many Christians today are looking for a fulfilling Christian experience instead of a deeply fulfilling relationship with God. Some are hoping for an ecstatic experience, some through a fuller knowledge of the Bible or a system of interpretation, some through disciplined efforts, ritual observances or ascetic self-denial. The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus Christ is central to the fulfillment we're looking for and without Him nothing will ultimately satisfy.

Colossians is one of the most Christ-centered books in the NT. The letter stresses the supremacy of the person of Christ and the completeness of the salvation He provides. Christ is the binding force of all things (1:17)

Paul did not preach about a system nor a philosophy, but a person - Jesus Christ.

In Jesus Christ we find the fullness of God and the fullness of our potential to make a difference in our world for God.

In Christ we have a unique personal relationship. In Christ we possess all that God is. God transforms our personalities with His presence.

Paul was writing from prison in Rome around AD 60 (Ac 28) to the church in Colosse, which was predominantly Gentile (1:27; 2:13). There was however, an unusually large Jewish population, so the mixture of Gentiles and Jews would account for the elements of Judaism and paganism in the False teaching that was going on. The Church was contending with an incipient form of Gnosticism (2:8-10), legalism (11-17), mysticism (18-19), and asceticism (20-23).

Colossians is one of four prison epistles written by Paul, Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon being the other three.

Although Paul had not personally visited the believers in Colossae, he'd heard about what was happening within the church from Epaphras who founded the church there (1:7; 4:12-13). Out of concern for the dangerous teaching the Colossian believers were being exposed to, Epaphras had come to see Paul in prison.

The timeless truths of the Bible are so contemporary. What the Colossian believers were facing when this letter was written are the same things we are faced with today.

Paul wrote this letter:

1. to strengthen the Colossian believers in their faith and to remind them of their completeness in Christ (Ch. 1).
2. to lead them on to maturity in Christ (2:1-17),
3. to warn them against the dangers of false teaching and to counter it (2:4,8,16-23)
4. to teach them about their new life in Christ (3:1-4:6),
5. to tell them what was happening in his life (4:7-18)

In Chapter 1:1-14, Paul is meticulous in his description of whom he was writing to. Notice how he describes them:

1. To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ (2)
2. We have heard of your faith in Christ (4)
3. The love you have for all the saints (4)
4. This Gospel is bearing fruit and growing among you (6)
5. You heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth (6)
6. Epaphras told us of your love in the Spirit (8)
7. The Father has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light (12)
8. He has rescued us (Paul includes all believers in Jesus Christ here) from the kingdom of darkness (13)
9. And brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves (13)
10. In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (14)

Who was Paul addressing here? Genuine believers in Jesus Christ without question. There's absolutely no mistaking this.

In vv15-20 Paul gives a verbal portrait of the person of Jesus Christ. There's absolutely no mistaking who Jesus Christ is. He is God of very God. By Him all things were created and the fullness of God is in Him (16,19).

In vv 21-23 Paul returned to the genuine believers he described earlier in vv1-14 and addressed their condition prior to becoming believers in Jesus Christ in v21 and then their position in Christ in v22, which, notice, was the result of what God had done to present them holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation – isn't this just incredible! Amazing! Given all that has been said, it seems incongruous to find a verse like v 23 in this context. How does v 23 read? "**If** you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel." What do you make of this? What does it sound like it's saying? That everything that has been said about the Colossian believers' position in Christ was conditioned upon their ability to continue in their faith and not move from their hope in Christ? What would happen if they didn't continue in their faith and what if they did move from their hope? We'll delve into this when we get to this verse in the weeks ahead.

In vv24-29 Paul describes his relationship and responsibility to the Colossian believers as members of Christ's body, the church.

So what applications can we make from what God is saying through Paul to believers then to believers in our day and age now?

Jesus Christ is to be the most important person in my life and I'm to live in a way that causes others to believe this about me (3:24).

The basic issue facing the Colossian believers was how to experience a truly fulfilling Christian life - only in Christ. The central teaching of the letter is the fullness of the Godhead (Deity) in Christ and the fullness of Christ in the believer (2:9,10).

Jesus is the full expression of God (1:3-29); The way to God (2:1-23); and The pattern for a fulfilling life (3:1-4:1). Only Jesus provides the pattern and the power for how we are to live in this world.

This letter describes what Christ did for us (Ch 1-2) and what Christ does through us (Ch 3-4).

What is Jesus' true identity?

How can I experience Christ's fullness in my life?

Why won't asceticism (denying myself certain things in life) or legalism (keeping rules or disciplines that I have set for myself) help me to grow spiritually?

How do I grow to spiritual maturity - what's the process? [close connection with Jesus (2:16-19)].

What do I have to hope for?

Why is it so important to believe in Jesus? (The only way we can live rightly is to believe rightly).

Can Jesus really make a difference in my life? Can knowing Jesus give me stability, peace, joy, happiness, meaning, hope, and purpose in life? (1:22; 2:6-7,10,3:3)

How do I relate to my spouse, children or the people around me in a healthy way?

These questions and others like them are answered in this exciting and penetrating letter that is a relevant today as it was when it was first written.

We'll continue with this introduction next Sunday morning.