

Sermon Notes for August 12, 2012

Sermon Series on Colossians
“The Supremacy of Christ”
Introduction
Colossians 1:1-2

Story of VBS and squirrel

Introduction

A. We Begin A NEW SERMON SERIES TODAY ON THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

1. types of sermons:
 - a. topical
 - b. textual
 - c. expositional
2. pluses and minuses of expositional sermons
 - a. pluses:
 1. the Preacher goes through every verse of a particular book, even the ones the preacher does not want to teach on
 2. covers a wide array of topics
 3. understands an entire book
 - b. minuses:
 1. often, takes a long, long time to get through a book
 - a. **M. L. Jones** took 13 years to preach through the book of Romans
 - b. **Donald G. Barnhouse** took 14 years to preach through Romans
 - c. a Puritan named **Joseph Caryl**, preached through the book of Job in 424 sermons over 24 years
 2. because you may be in one book for so long, you may not learn much about other books in the Bible
 3. much of the book that is being preached through will be missed because no one is at church all the time
 4. if I visited a church and the Pastor said he would be preaching through Romans, I probably would not return for I know that he would be in Romans for at least 5 -7 years

B. Today, WE WILL BE “INTRODUCED” TO THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

1. the author
2. the audience
3. the basic theme of the book
4. I would encourage you to get the sermons emailed to you—you will have a full commentary of the book of Colossians at the end of this sermon series

I. The AUTHOR OF COLOSSIANS

A. The CREDIBILITY OF PAUL

Vs. 1 – “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,”

1. “right off the bat,” Paul indentified himself as the author of Colossians, **and** as an apostle
 - a. let me tell you how unique an apostle was; there were certain characteristics of an apostle:
 1. they had seen the risen Christ
 2. they had been personally called by the risen Christ to be an apostle
 3. they were given supernatural gifts of healing
 4. many of them actually wrote a book of the Bible
 - b. consequently, I do not believe that there are apostles who are living today
2. while I do not think that Paul was trying to be arrogant by calling himself an apostle, I do believe that Paul wanted the church at Colossae to know that he was speaking as one specifically called by God and that the church should listen to what he was going to say to them.

B. The CALL OF PAUL

Vs. 1 – “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,”

1. Paul wanted the church to know that being an apostle **“was not his idea”**
 - a. but that he was called “by the will of God” to minister to them
 - b. it was as if Paul was saying: “if God calls you to do something, you do it”
 - c. anyone who has ever been called into the ministry knows exactly what the apostle Paul is saying here
 1. God puts a burden on you that you cannot run away from
 2. there may be a time of arguing, complaining and even begging, but you know that God has called you
 3. and, no matter what else you may “try” to do, you will never be happy doing it—no matter how great the job or how much money you will make
 4. my call to ministry has been exactly like that
 5. when someone comes to me and says, “I think God is calling me into ministry:
 - a. I tell them not to worry about it
 - b. however, if that same person returns in 4 months to say that he “still” is struggling with God’s call, I tell him that we need to talk
2. Paul also wanted to know **“who he was working for”**
 - a. Paul called himself, “an apostle of **Christ Jesus”**
 1. Christ
 - a. the anointed One, the Messiah, the One prophesied in the Old Testament
 - b. the creator of the world; the sovereign God
 2. Jesus
 - a. the One, and only One, who could bring salvation
 - b. the Savior of the world
 - b. **ULTIMATELY, CHRIST JESUS WAS THE ONE WHO CALLED HIM AND URGED HIM TO WRITE THIS LETTER**

- c. it is somewhat like what young David said to Goliath when he faced him in the Valley of Elah
I Samuel 17:45-47 – “David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, **but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.**”
- d. In essence, Paul was saying, “I am writing you because the God of the universe has told me to do so – you had better listen.”

C. The COMMUNITY OF PAUL

1. PLEASE NOTICE WHAT PAUL **”ADDED”** AT THE END OF VERSE ONE
 - a. After such lofty statements about being called by God and serving Christ Jesus
 - b. Listen to what Paul said:
Vs. 1 – “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God; **and Timothy, our brother.**”
2. why did Paul insert this comment about Timothy after he had written such a lofty sentence about his calling by God?
 - a. **BECAUSE PAUL DID NOT SERVE IN HIS GREAT CALLING ALONE!**
 1. we cannot and must not think that this great apostle was a loner; untouched, with no feelings
 2. **we cannot look at Paul as one who did not need support or companionship**
 - b. Paul met a young Timothy, who was probably a teenager, on his second missionary journey as he traveled through a town called Lystra (in southern Turkey)
 1. here he met a very young man who was already known as a disciple of Jesus
 2. immediately, Paul wanted Timothy to minister **with him**
 - c. these two men would served together for some 25 years
 1. side by side
 2. taking the gospel all over the world
 3. without a doubt, Timothy was Paul’s closest friend, supporter and confidant
3. PLEASE DON’T EVER THINK THAT MINISTRY SHOULD BE DONE ALONE!
 - A. **EVERYONE SERVES BEST IN THE CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY!**
 - b. INCLUDING PASTORS!
 1. how lonely a Pastor can be:
 - a. some people think that Pastors don’t need friends
 - b. people think that Pastors have Jesus, and that is enough
 - c. **Focus On The Family** – “At least **70%** of all Pastors in the United States claim that they **have no friends.**”

2. look how deeply Paul loved those he served with in **Acts 20:36-38** – “When he (Paul) had said this, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. **They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him.** What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.”
 - a. Paul had lived in Ephesus for 3 years, ministering there with these elders
 - b. I am sure that I will have the same response with our elders when it comes my time to leave here

4. let me say this again: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND MINISTRY IS SUPPOSED TO BE LIVED IN THE CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY!

Hear the story of a Pastor named, John Phillips:

“When I was in the British Army in Palestine, I found myself stationed on Haifa docks. I arrived at the army base in the middle of the week, a total stranger in a foreign land. **On Sunday, I left the camp in the morning to see if I could find a fellowship of believers.** I wandered up the slope of Mount Carmel until my eye caught sight of a small building just down a side road. It bore a small sign that read “**Gospel Hall.**” I knew what that meant. **It was a gathering of believers, commonly known as “Plymouth Brethren.”** I had been raised among them. I knew all about them. **I had come home!**

I did not arrive back on the base until late that night. Some of the men in the barracks wanted to know where I had been all day.

“I’ve been to church.”

“**At church? All day??**”

“**Well, no, not at church all day. I had lunch in the home of a Palestinian Arab and spent most of the day with him and his unmarried sisters and widowed mother. I had supper in the home of a Russian Jew, and after the evening service at the church, I was invited to the home of a British civil servant who holds a high position in the Palestine Railway.**”

The men were incredulous.

“**How long have you been in this country??**”

“**About six or seven days.**”

“Are you telling us the truth?”

“Yes. You can come with me next Sunday if you like.”

The men continued to be incredulous. One of the men finally said. “That must be some kind of a lodge you belong to!”

It was no lodge. It was the family of God.

I remained in Haifa for nearly two years, and **every Sunday was the same story of love, generosity, and open-handed hospitality.** Links of love and fellowship were forged that lasted for many years.

II. The AUDIENCE IN COLOSSIANS

A. The LOCATION OF THE CHURCH

1. Colossae was located about 100 miles to the east of the city of Ephesus (in modern Turkey) (slide)

2. at one time it was a major city because of its place on the Roman's highway system
3. however, Rome decided to move their "interstate system" away from Colossae and Colossae became a small, insignificant town

B. The LEGACY OF THE CHURCH

1. they were **holy**

Vs. 2 – "To the **holy** and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae:"

- a. what holy is **not**:

1. Paul was not saying that the Christians at Colossae were perfect or sinless
2. that is not what this word means

- b. what holy **is**:

1. what holy actually means is:

- a. to be set apart
- b. called by God

2. Paul fully believed that believers do not save himself

- a. instead, Paul believed that **God** saved sinners
- b. their salvation was seen as being "set apart" and "made holy" by God

3. what Paul was REALLY saying is this:

- a. the believer is holy **BECAUSE he is linked to the perfection of Jesus Christ**

- b. so, Paul clearly stated that the believers in Colossae were saved and secure because of their dependence on Christ!

- c. in this word holy, Paul spoke of their "**justification**"
 1. being justified because of what **Christ did** for them on the cross
 2. they were secure in Christ

4. Paul also wanted the believers at Colossae to know that he, as an apostle,

- a. totally believed that they **were saved**
- b. and that he wanted to treat them as saved people

2. they were **faithful**

Vs. 2 – "To the holy and **faithful** brothers in Christ at Colosse."

- a. whereas, the word holy spoke of their secure position or justification

- b. this word faithful referred to their **sanctification**

1. and whereas, the word holy referred to what Jesus had done for the believers in Colossae

2. **now, Paul spoke of what the Colossians had done for Christ**

- c. in a dark, godless world in the second century, the believers in Colossae had been faithful "to" their salvation

1. do you have any idea about the spiritual climate in the ancient world?
 - a. I am not going to list the sins
 - b. but, trust me, America is like Disneyland compared to the ancient world regarding their involvement in blatant, obvious sins
2. because of this, Paul praised the believers in Colossae for their faithfulness, **DESPITE SIN ALL AROUND THEM, THEY WERE:**
 - a. faithful to walk with Jesus
 - b. faithful to read His Word
 - c. faithful to a Godly lifestyle
 - d. faithful to minister to others
- d. **THIS WORD CLEARLY TEACHES US THAT THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS NOT MEANT TO BE PASSIVE**
 1. “I just let go and let God”
 2. “I make no effort at all because God will take care of it for me”
 3. “It doesn’t matter how I live, because I am saved”
 4. **TRUST ME, WE WILL ALL BE JUDGED BY GOD ACCORDING TO HOW FAITHFUL WE WERE WITH WHAT GOD HAS GIVEN US**
 - a. **at the last judgment; Matthew 25:34-36** – ““Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. **For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.**”
 - b. **the parable of the talents: Matthew 25:26-27** – “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? **Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.**”

C. The LEADERSHIP OF THE CHURCH

1. most of you probably think that the Apostle Paul planted the church at Colossae
2. however, the Apostle Paul did **NOT** plant the church at Colossae; in fact, there is no record that he ever even went to Colossae!
3. **no, a “regular, non-ordained, run of the mill, believer,” named Epaphras, planted the church at Colossae**
 - a. apparently, when Paul was preaching in Ephesus, Epaphras heard the gospel and became a Christian

- b. the apostle Paul probably disciplined Epaphras and encouraged him to plant a church in his hometown of Colossae

4. WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS?

a. **one**, this challenges the **“typical” view of ministry**

1. nowhere in this Book does it teach that only seminary—trained people can serve Jesus!
2. Epaphras was not ordained, not seminary trained and he started the church WITH PAUL’S BLESSINGS!
3. I LOVE THIS COMMENT FROM Warren Wiersbe:
“God does not always need an apostle, or a “full-time Christian worker” to get a ministry established.”

b. **two**, this challenges the **“typical” view of world missions**

1. most churches and denominations believe that, in order to be an effective missionary, you have to be totally trained and prepared, usually in a Bible college or seminary
2. because of this view, most American denominations believe that American missionaries must fully train the nationals in a particular country before they “let them loose” to minister in their own country
 - a. while I do believe in training nationals to serve
 - b. I do not think that nationals cannot be trusted to minister
 - c. the **Spontaneous Expansion of the Church** by Roland Allen
 1. “Many years ago my experience in China taught me that if our goal was to establish, in that country, a church that would spread over the six provinces, that goal could **only be attained** if the first Christians who were converted by our labours understood clearly that they could **by themselves, without any further assistance from us, not only convert their neighbours, but establish churches.**”
 2. “Missionaries can never successfully direct the propagation of any faith **throughout a whole country**. If the faith does not permeate a particular country’s culture and expand among a nation **by its own vital power**, this creates an alarming and hateful influence, and men fear and shun it as something alien.”
 3. “Many have realized that our missionaries must aim at laying such a foundation that India may be evangelized by Indians, China by Chinese, Africa by Africans; each country by its own Christians.”

D. The LURE OF THE COLOSSIANS

1. if you want to know one of the **REAL REASONS** that the Apostle Paul wrote this letter to the church at Colossae, it was because of a theological error that could potentially affect the church
2. this error was a mixture of Greek and Jewish beliefs;
 - a. from **Greek** philosophy:
 1. the Greek belief was that the physical body was evil
 2. as a result of this view, this “theology” taught that Jesus could **not** have come to this earth in the form of a body because the body was evil
 3. Paul would counter this view in his letter in **Colossians 2:9** – “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity **lives in bodily form,**”
 - b. from **Jewish** culture:
 1. this group also believed that, like the Jews, certain ceremonial laws had to be practiced and obeyed in “order for someone to be saved”
 2. the Apostle countered this view in **Colossians 2:16-17** – “Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you **eat or drink**, or with regard to a **religious festival**, a **New Moon celebration** or a **Sabbath day**. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; **the reality, however, is found in Christ.**”

III. The ATTITUDE FROM PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS

A. He REMINDED THEM OF GOD’S GRACE

Vs. 2b – “**Grace** and peace from God our Father.”

1. as Paul wrote his greeting to the believers and Colossae, Paul used a common, Christian greeting
2. for Paul wanted all believers EVERYWHERE to understand these two words: “**grace and peace;**”
3. what Paul meant by grace!
 - a. THE WORD AND THE CONCEPT that Paul wanted all Christians everywhere to understand was this word, grace
 - b. **FOR:**
 1. it was **grace** that “caused” God to choose us before the foundation of the world to be His children
 2. it was **grace** that was shown to us as He called us to Himself, despite the fact that we did not want to be called
 3. it is **grace** that “puts up with us” as we sin and He still loves us
 4. and, it will be **grace** that will take us to heaven
“Amazing Grace”
 “Through many dangers, toils and snares I have already come;
 tis grace that brought me safe thus far and **grace will lead me home.**”

4. grace was also a greeting from fellow believers to one another
 - a. so that when a believer greeted another believer with the word “grace” you were saying to one another:
 1. “Don’t forget how God graced you, fellow believer”
 2. “We had nothing to do with our salvation”
 3. “It is all of grace”
 4. “Praise God”
 - b. **THIS TRUTH WAS SO IMPORTANT TO PAUL THAT IT WAS IN THE INITIAL GREETING OF ALL OF HIS LETTERS TO CHURCHES!**

C. He REMINDED THEM OF GOD’S PEACE

Vs. 2 – “Grace and **peace** from God our Father.”

1. however, there was yet another concept that the Apostle Paul wanted the church at Colossae to grasp in his greeting
2. in addition to the concept of grace, Paul wanted the church at Colossae to grasp the concept of peace
 1. there are two aspects of **peace**
 - a. our peace “**with**” God
 1. we all need to realize that, until a person has trusted in the finished work of Christ by becoming a Christian, that person is still “at enmity” with God
 - a. in other words, if Christ has **not** covered or paid for one’s sins, that person is not “at peace **with** God.”
 - b. in fact, look at **John 3:36** – “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but **whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.**”
 2. do you realize what “this peace” means to the believer?
 - a. you are no longer “under God’s judgment,” and you will never be “under judgment.”
 - b. and because of what Christ has done for you, you will spend eternity in heaven; forever!
 - b. the peace “**of**” God
 1. now, BECAUSE we have peace “with” God, we also have the peace “**of**” God
 2. whereas, the peace “with” God is objective and factual; the peace “of” God is subjective and emotional
 3. **please understand what”kind of peace” this is**
 - a. it is a peace DESPITE anything that life throws at you
 1. the loss of a job
 2. the loss of your health
 3. a bad report from the Doctor
 4. peace; the absence of conflict; brokenness; depression; worry
 - b. **John 16:33** – ““I have told you these things, **so that in me you may have peace.** In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

4. let me ask you this question: **if you could “sell this kind of peace” to those who are not saved, what do you think they would pay?**

Conclusion:

1. this is how we all are to look at Jesus Christ:
Dr. S. D. Gordon tells of an old Christian woman who began to experience some dementia. She had once known much of the Bible by heart. Eventually, only one precious verse stayed with her from **II Timothy 1:12** - **“I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I committed unto Him against that day.”** As the days passed, portions of that verse would be forgotten; but she still remembered a part of the verse, **“That which I have committed unto Him.”** At last, as she hovered on the borderline between this world and heaven, her loved ones noticed her lips moving and they bent down to see if she needed anything. She was repeating over and over again to herself the one word of the text, **“Him, Him, Him.”** She had forgotten the whole Bible, except one word. . . **”Him.”** She had the whole Bible in that one word.”
2. As I close, I want to tell you what the book of Colossians is REALLY all about
 - a. Paul was very, very concerned about false teaching that could cause the believer at Colossae to misunderstand who Jesus Christ was and is
 - b. so, Paul wrote this letter to explain to them the SUPREMACY OF CHRIST**

COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

Leader: He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

People: For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him.

Leader: He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

People: And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy.

ALL: For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross.

