

ALL SUFFICIENT CHRIST

7-25-99 -- Marietta, Ohio -- Colossians 1:15-23

Turn in your bibles to the Colossian epistle, this morning I would like to share with you for a few moments a message of the all-sufficiency of Christ. Now the church at Colossi was very small, and can you image a “brotherhood biggie” writing a letter to the Pinehurst Church, could you imagine Paul writing a letter to us — why would he bother? This was in all probability to the smallest church that Paul encountered. What was it famous for? NOTHING! Paul was writing from jail and he is talking about the all-sufficiency of Christ. Now this is a strange epistle because Paul had never been to Colossi as far as biblical information is concerned. He was assuming that they knew who Christ was. He was not assuming a polarization between the informed and the uninformed. He knew that church at Colossi was located in a region where a main highway went eastward, and everyone that traveled from Rome to the east would pass through Colossi. A man in jail, writing to an insignificant church about the all sufficiency of Christ.

Colossians 1:15-23

“He is the image of the invisible God, and the first born of all creation.” Now when the Jehovah witness come to your house your already armed with what that means, because what they say it means isn’t the truth. *“For in Him all things were created: both in the Heavens and on the earth visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.”* That ought to at least excite some people. *“And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”*

[sunistao -- sunistano -- sunistemi] shouldn't be translated merely hold together, but it's all things move toward a goal — they have a purpose together. *“He is also the head of the body, the church: he is the beginning and the firstborn from the realm of the dead, so that he himself might have first place in everything.”* [Protocos] EVERYTHING, EVERY DECISION, everything.

“For it was the Fathers good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in him.” And you can't even get excited about that, many church members need a 3 ring circus to get excited, but that's their problem not God's. *“And through him to reconcile all things to himself, having made peace with the blood of the cross through him I say whether things on earth or things in heaven. Although you were formally alienated and hostile in mind engaged in evil deeds, yet he has now reconciled you in his fleshly body through death in order to present you before Him holy, blameless, and beyond reproach.”* He is the only place in the universe where that can occur, *“If indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed to all creation under heaven and of which I Paul was made a minister.”*

There are 5 fundamental teachings from this magnificent document that we need to practice if the church is going to show the world that Christ is all sufficient.

How can we speak of the all-sufficiency of Christ, where? For whom? Since January 22, 1973 — 39,354,294 babies have been aborted. They estimate that it takes until the middle of May, working full time for the average American just to pay their portion of the income tax! Now we talk about the all-sufficiency of Christ in a world where you have to have hard headed realism just to survive. Where is the Church in that world? What's the church saying in the name of God?

Now hear this tiny parity about the age of rip-off, then 5 things that Paul wanted the church at Colossi to understand because they are Christians. If you've been Christians so long as a year you are responsible for information of the Bible to the world, if you've been longer, it's a moral issue.

Now this is the age of the rip-off, never have so many clever fingers picked so many innocent pockets. If you watch your wallet your shirt disappears. “The Devil With Jack, I'm Getting Mine,” has replaced “In God We Trust” as our National Motto. The most ruthless of all the rip-off artists may be that collection of “impotent manys” in the White House. Costs of the government now costs \$400 billion per year. Everywhere we turn it doesn't look like Christ is all-sufficient, but I would suggest that he is Lord of all our chaos, and the only hope that man has is the Christ of the Church.

The 1st of 5 things that I will share with you is the Colossian epistle is a warning against all religious **syncretism** [*Reconciliation or fusion of differing systems of belief, as in philosophy or religion, especially when success is partial or the result is heterogeneous (Consisting of dissimilar elements or parts; not homogeneous)*]. What's that mean? That means trying to gather all the things that you like or I like and put them together into a mess. In the last 35 years in the western world alone there are over 2500 new religious groups. Why did they come into existence? At least in a simplified since for 2 reasons: 1. Because the established religious groups did not meet peoples needs. 2. Because they say they have the answers to life. 2500 new religious groups, almost all of them claiming to be Christians almost all of them denying the deity of Jesus Christ. We don't hear much anymore about the deity of Jesus Christ and the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Why? Because it is so far removed from the pragmatic world. But it isn't because the pragmatic world is coming apart.

Paul brings a warning to me to you and to this Church to watch out trying to syncretize or put together things that are mutually exclusive. He is the creator of the World. Now isn't that strange, the all sufficiency of Christ, and the man that was writing this was

in jail. Now if He is all-sufficient get him out of jail. Now Paul didn't say He was all-sufficient to get him out of jail, he said He was all sufficient and my being in jail won't affect the purpose of God. So if you are with or without Christ based on how well things are going in your personal life, you might get that straightened out while there is still time.

I would encourage you to do that. You see if you go through the role book of people who used to come and ask them why they left, you will get answers like we didn't like the Reverend, or I felt my personal needs weren't being met. I submit to that we are here this AM because of the creator of the universe!! We are here to worship God revealed thru Christ. It has nothing to do with "who's here."

It's a warning. You see the problem at the church at Colossi was that they were trying to assimilate Gnosticism. Now Paul thought that Christians ought to understand that because being a Christian meant that you couldn't assimilate Gnosticism. Which means a minimum of 2 things, that they know what Christianity is and that they know what Gnosticism is and they know that they can't put them together. Now we should pray for the day that every church member in the community of Marietta knows the difference between biblical Christianity and when it isn't.

Now the church will present an alternative to this world with an all-sufficient Christ. Now notice I didn't say an all-sufficient Christ when you are terminally ill, or when you're bankrupt. But to project an all-sufficient Christ whether you die or I die, weather your bankrupt, or weather we never smile another time in our lives. **GOD IS LORD OVER THE UNIVERSE, AND THAT IS THE MOST POWERFUL COMFORT, AND BASE OF HOPE THAT WE NEED TO SHARE WITH EVERYONE IN THIS SMALL RURAL COMMUNITY IN SOUTHEASTERN OHIO. WE NEED TO TELL THE WORLD THAT CHRIST IS SUFFICIENT, BECAUSE OF WHO HE IS. IT'S NOT A GAME, ITS NOT A CIRCUS, IT'S NOT PLAY TIME. IT'S NOT DID YOU LIKE THE MUSIC OR DID YOU LIKE WHAT YOU HEARD, BUT RATHER HOW ARE WE IN RELATIONSHIP TO GOD THE ALL-SUFFICIENT CHRIST. AND WE DO NOT TELL THE WORLD THAT CHRIST IS SUFFICIENT WHEN OUR WHOLE BEHAVIOR DEMONSTRATES THAT HE IS NOT SUFFICIENT FOR OUR LIVES.** It's a warning against all religious syncretism.

It is a reminder to summon the whole church to remember **THAT JESUS CHRIST IS THE ABSOLUTELY UNIQUE REVELATION OF GOD IN THE WHOLE UNIVERSE.** And therefore men need to accept him as Lord. You see you and I must preach Christ, because people are **LOST!** They can not save themselves, and they need to know that.

A second thing that this magnificent epistle ask all of us to keep in mind, beware of false absolutes. Let me ask you this, what are your absolutes? Now how do you tell that?

By what determines your behavior. What is the basis that comes to mind when you justify what you do. The Colossian epistle is a pronouncement against all false absolutes, and all absolutes are false, only Christ is God's absolute. So if your travel trailer is your absolute, your boat is your absolute, your job, your money, your status in the community, your family—that is condemned in this document. False absolutes, only Christ is God's absolute. Hear those words again, they are splendid, we ought to be able to create a revival just reading these great words "*and he is the image of the invisible God*". What does that do to you, well we say, "I don't even understand it a little, let alone does it do anything for me?" Now you got it. The church isn't the church until it understands it. You see that's the difference between being Christians and simply belonging to a sociological club that we attend sometimes on Sunday morning. False absolutes, let's all of us examine our absolutes.

A 3rd thing, it is a confrontation with elite decision-makers in the church. You see I believe that the biblical doctrine of the church that it has a leadership ministry to tell everybody about the scriptures and about the world. The Colossian epistle is a warning against elitist religious leadership. It means 2 things: it means that every Christian is responsible for the whole purpose of God, and it means that we better understand that if the church is going to represent the creator of the universe. The All-Sufficiency of Christ, why it doesn't look like anybody includes Christ in decision making. The government doesn't, OPEC doesn't. Have you evaluated decision making procedures lately, does God enter into that? Does Christ enter into that?

Now the 4th warning. It's a warning against separating thought and action. You see the issue is not culture or education, it's about being Christian or not being Christian. **WHAT IS IT TO BE A CHRISTIAN IN THE 20TH CENTURY OR THE 1ST CENTURY OR ANY CENTURY. IT IS TO REPRESENT THE PURPOSE OF GOD IN THE UNIVERSE!** Now if this epistle is a warning, you see it's not negative because Christ is central, Paul lifts up Jesus Christ LORD, SAVIOR, REDEEMER, HELPER, MASTER, FRIEND. HE LIFTS HIM UP SO MEN CAN SEE AND WHEN THE CHURCH SEES THEN THE WORLD SEES AND WHEN THE WORLD DOESN'T SEE IT BECAUSE THE CHURCH DOESN'T SEE. AND WHEN THE CHURCH DOESN'T SEE IT IT DOESN'T PRESENT AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE WORLD. Now it doesn't take a Harvard graduate to see that our world is not making its decisions on the basis of the Christian gospel. Now that's the challenge to the body Christ, that's the challenge. Separate belief and behavior? Ask yourself "what do I believe about Christ and what does that do to my behavior?" I believe that he created the universe, and I believe that he invaded history and nature, that he died on a cross in a tiny little community 1/10th the size of the state on Indiana, it's not where it is, it's who's there that's aware that God is moving in on the world at that point. And that's why we need to show the world the all-sufficient Christ, sufficient to need, to anxieties, to hurt, to tragedies, to tears, to taxes, to rip-off artists. That's why we

need not despair. But it isn't because of the condition of the world; we do not despair because our faith is placed in the one who will ultimately prevail.

The 5th and final word from this great epistle. That the all-sufficient Christ must be lifted over the market place. That's what this epistle suggests. That the church must understand its faith in Christ. That it isn't the Sunday school contest, or fill a pew night, it isn't \$100,000 bus and 54 changes to a 3-ring circus to keep the church hot. It's Christ. It was a man that was red hot with Christ that wrote, in all probability, with heavy roman chains around his arms, and he talked about the all-sufficiency of Christ, he didn't need counseling, he didn't wear his clothes out from the inside, because he had that resource, in the indwelling power of the Lord of the universe. What do we do with our time in a world where we're trying to stay alive? What about the all-sufficient Christ? What do we do with our time, in trying to show the world the relevance of an all-sufficient Christ for our sins, our actions, and our thoughts? Are we really showing the world that Jesus Christ is LORD?

In closing this last little bit of scripture:

Jesus is Lord; this is the confession of the Apostolic Church. Romans 10:9 ought to get our attention if nothing else does on this subject because Paul writes:
“Because if you acknowledge and [*continue to*] confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and in your heart believe (adhere to, trust in, and rely on the truth) that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” [AMP]

JESUS IS LORD, and because he is Lord is all-sufficient. We must preach that, but most of all we must live that.

If you are here this morning and you have not obeyed the biblical teaching of salvation, The Lord is calling you now.

These are the words of Jesus himself.

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, "I am the 'way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.

Luke 13:3

"I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

Mark 16:16

"He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.

The Word has been shared, the invitation is offered, the decision is yours.