

“THE DNA OF ABYSSINIAN BAPTIST CHURCH”
PART I

“WHAT ARE WE MADE OF?”

COLOSSIANS 1:15-29

INTRODUCTION

TODAY, I WANT TO LAY A FOUNDATION OF WHAT WE’RE GOING TO TALK ABOUT FOR THE NEXT 3 WEEKS.

THE DESIRE OF GOD’S HEART IS THAT EVERYTHING JESUS CHRIST MIGHT HAVE THE PREEMINENCE.

PAUL DECLARES THAT EVERYTHING FINDS IT MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE IN CHRIST.

CHRIST MUST BE AT THE CENTER OF ALL THINGS, BOTH IN OUR INDIVIDUAL LIVES AND IN THE CHURCH.

WE CLAIM THAT CHRIST IS THE CENTER OF THE CHURCH, BUT IS HE?

ILLUSTRATION

A. W. TOZER SAID, “THE PRESENT POSITION OF CHRIST IN MANY CHURCHES MAY BE LIKENED TO THAT OF A KING IN A LIMITED CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY.

THE KING (SOMETIMES DEPERSONALIZED BY THE TERM “THE CROWN”) IS, IN SUCH A COUNTRY, NO MORE THAN A TRADITIONAL RALLYING POINT, A PLEASANT SYMBOL OF UNITY AND LOYALTY SUCH LIKE A FLAY OR A NATIONAL ANTHEM.

HE IS LAUDED, FETED AND SUPPORTED, BUT HIS REAL AUTHORITY IS SMALL.

NOMINALLY HE IS HEAD OVER ALL, BUT IN EVERY CRISIS SOMEONE ELSE MAKES THE DECISIONS.

CONSIDER WITH ME THE IMPACT OF HAVING CHRIST AT THE CENTER OF OUR CHURCH.

FOUR THINGS OUR CHURCH MUST REMEMBER AS WE PURSUE GOD'S VISION.

I. THE FIRST THING WE MUST REMEMBER IS THE SOURCE OF OUR STRENGTH.

COL. 1:15-17 KJV: (15) WHO IS THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD, THE FIRSTBORN OF EVERY CREATURE;

(16) FOR BY HIM WERE ALL THINGS CREATED, THAT ARE IN HEAVEN, AND THAT ARE IN EARTH, VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE, WHETHER THEY BE THRONES, OR DOMINIONS, OR PRINCIPALITIES, OR POWERS: ALL THINGS WERE CREATED BY HIM, AND FOR HIM:

(17) AND HE IS BEFORE ALL THINGS, AND BY HIM ALL THINGS CONSIST:

A. WHAT'S THE POINT PAUL IS MAKING?

- 1. IT'S THAT EVERYTHING... EVERYTHING... ALWAYS COMES BACK TO JESUS.**
- 2. ALL THINGS WERE CREATED THROUGH HIM FOR HIM.**
- 3. JESUS IS THE ONE THROUGH WHOM THE FATHER CREATES THE UNIVERSE.**
- 4. EVEN MORE AMAZING IS THAT THE UNIVERSE WAS CREATED FOR HIM.**
- 5. JESUS IS THE STARTING POINT OF CREATION AND THE GOAL OF CREATION.**
- 6. HE IS TRULY THE ALPHA AND OMEGA.**

B. JESUS WAS NOT GOD'S 'PLAN B.'

1. THE PURPOSE OF HISTORY AND CREATION IS FOR THE REVELATION AND GLORIFICATION OF CHRIST.

C. I LOVE THE AY DUTCH THEOLOGIAN, ABRAHAM KUYPER, PUTS IT:

1. “WHEN JESUS LOOKS AT HIS UNIVERSE FROM HIS EXALTED THRONE AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE FATHER, AND HE SEES THE GREAT GALAXIES WHIRLING IN SPACE, THE PLANETS AND THE PEOPLE UPON THIS PLANET, AND ALL THE MINUTE DETAILS OF OUR INDIVIDUAL LIVES, THERE IS NOTHING THAT HE SEES ANYWHERE OF WHICH HE CANNOT SAY, “MINE!”

D. THAT’S THE GOD WE SERVE. IT’S ALL HIS.

1. SO WHEN WE REMEMBER THE SOURCE OF OUR STRENGTH, THIS IS WHAT WE NEED TO REMEMBER.

2. HE’S BIG ENOUGH,

3. HE’S STRONG ENOUGH.

4. HE CAN MEET ALL OF OUR NEEDS.

5. AND YOU KNOW WHAT THE MEANS FOR US AS A CHURCH?

6. IT MEANS OUR CHURCH IS HIS.

7. CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH (VS. 18-19)

COL. 1:18 -19: (18) AND HE IS THE HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH: WHO IS THE BEGINNING, THE FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD; THAT IS ALL THINGS HE MIGHT HAVE THE PREEMINENCE.

(19) FOR IT PLEASED THE FATHER THAT IN HIM SHOULD ALL FULNESS DWELL;

II. **THE SECOND THING WE MUST REMEMBER IS THE PRIVILEGE GOD HAS GIVEN US.**

COL. 1:21-23 (KJV): (21) AND YOU, THAT WERE SOMETIME ALIENATED AND ENEMIES IN YOUR MIND BY WICKED WORKS, YET NOW HATH HE RECONCILED.

(22) IN THE BODY OF HIS FLESH THROUGH DEATH, TO PRESENT YOU HOLY AND UNBLAMABLE AND UNREPROVABLE IN HIS SIGHT:

(23) IF YE CONTINUE IN THE FAITH GROUNDED AND SETTLED, AND BE NOT MOVED AWAY FROM THE HOPE OF THE FOSPEL, WHICH YE HAVE HEARD, AND WHICH WAS PREACHED TO EVERY CREATURE WHICH IS UNDER HEAVEN; WHEREOF I PAUL AM MADE A MINISTER;

- A. WHEN CHRIST IS NOT THE CENTRAL FOCUS OF WORSHIP WE GET SIDETRACKED AND BEGIN TO FOCUS ON STYLE AND MODES.
 - 1. IF CHRIST IS NOT CENTRAL THEN EVERYTHING ELSE SUCH AS A “SANCTUARY,” OR HYMNALS, OR MULTIMEDIA, OR THE SOLOIST’S TALENT CAN BECOME UNCONSCIOUSLY THE CENTER OF WORSHIP.
- B. WHEN CHRIST IS NOT THE CENTRAL FOCUS OF THE CHURCH CONFLICTS ARISE.
 - 1. INDIVIDUALS BEGIN TO SEEK HAVING THINGS DONE THEIR WAY AND TALK ABOUT “MY” CHURCH.
 - 2. WHEN CHRIST IS THE HEART OF THE CHURCH THERE IS UNITY.
 - 3. SOME HAS SAID, “JESUS IS THE CENTRAL FIGURE IN OUR TOGETHERNESS.”

4. WE ARE BROUGHT INTO HIS BODY BY GRACE.

III. WE MUST REMEMBER THE CALLING WE HAVE RECEIVED. (VS 24-27)

COL. 1:24-27 (24) WHO NOW REJOICE IN MY SUFFERINGS FOR YOU, AND FILL UP THAT WHICH IS BEHIND OF THE AFFLICTIONS OF CHRIST IN MY FLESH FOR HIS BODY'S SAKE, WHICH IS THE CHURCH:

(25) WHEREOF I AM MADE A MINISTER, ACCORDING TO THE DISPENSATION OF GOD WHICH IS GIVEN TO ME FOR YOU, TO FULFIL THE WORD OF GOD;

(26) EVEN THE MYSTERY WHICH HATH BEEN HID FROM AGES AND FROM GENERATIONS, BUT NOW IS MADE MANIFEST TO HIS SAINTS:

(27) TO WHO GOD WOULD MAKE NOWN WHAT IS THE RICHES OF THE GLORY OF THIS MYSTERY AMONG THE GENTILES; WHICH IS CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY:

IV. WE MUST REMEMBER THE COMMISSION CHRIST CHARGED US WITH. (VS 28-29)

COL. 1:28-29 (28) WHOM WE PREACH, WARNING EVERY MAN, AND TEACHING EVERY MAN IN ALL WISDOM; THAT WE MAY PRESENT EVERY MAN PERFECT IN CHRIST JESUS:

(29) WHEREUNTO I ALSO LABOR, STRIVING ACCORDING TO HIS WORKING, WHICH WORKETH IN ME MIGHTILY.

A. WE MUST EMBRACE THIS HOP AND WORK TIRELESSLY TO SHARE IT.

1. WHEN CHRIST IS NOT CENTRAL IN THE CHURCH, THE CHURCH LOSES ITS FOCUS; ITS PURPOSE AND MISSION BECOME UNCLEAR.

B. WHY DOES THE CHURCH EXIST?

1. **IN A SURVEY OF 1000 CHURCHES WHO WERE GIVEN TWO CHOICES AS TO WHY THE CHURCH EXISTS:**
 - a. **TO WIN THE WORLD FOR CHRIST OR**
 - b. **TO CARE FOR THE NEEDS OF ITS MEMBERS.**
 - 2, **THE RESPONSE BY PASTORS WAS 90% (a) AND 10% (b).**
 3. **OF THE CHURCH MEMBERS SURVEYED, 89% SAID, “THE CHURCH’S PURPOSE IS TO TAKE CARE OF MY FAMILY’S NEEDS AND MY NEEDS.”**
 4. **THE SURVEYOR CONCLUDED THAT FOR MANY CHURCHES, THE ROLE OF THE PASTOR IS SIMPLY TO KEEP THE SHEEP WHO ARE ALREADY IN THE “PEN” HAPPY AND NOT LOSE TOO MANY OF THEM.**
 5. **ONLY 11% SAID, “THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH IS TO WIN THE WORLD FOR JESUS CHRIST.”**
- C. EPHESIANS 4:11-12, AND HE HIMSELF GAVE SOME TO BE APOSTLES, SOME PROPHETS, SOME EVANGELISTS, AND SOME PASTORS AND TEACHERS, FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF MINISTRY, FOR THE EDIFYING OF THE BODY OF CHRIST.**
- D. WHEN CHRIST IS NOT AT THE CENTER OF THE CHURCH THE FIRES OF LOVE AND MISSION GROW COLD.**
1. **THE PURPOSE OF THE ABYSSINIAN BAPTIST CHURCH IS TO HELP PEOPLE KNOW GOD, TO GROW PEOPLE INTO FULLY DEVOTED DISCIPLES OF JESUS, AND TO EQUIP PEOPLE TO GO IMPACT THEIR WORLD FOR CHRIST.**

CONCLUSION**A. SO WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?**

1. WHAT I WANT TO DRIVE HOME TO YOU IS THAT CHRIST IS BOTH SUFFICIENT AND SUPREME.

B. WE CAN TAKE SOLACE IN THOUGHT THAT OUR GOD IS SUPREME.

1. HE IS ABOVE ALL KINGS AND AUTHORITIES WHETHER EARTHLY OR SPIRITUAL.
2. WE CAN ALSO TAKE TO HEART IN ALL THE RICHES THAT WE HAVE IN CHRIST.

C. I LIKE THE WAY PASTER MICHAEL BIRD PUT IT WHEN HE SAID THAT IN CHRIST, WE RECEIVE:

1. A LOVE THAT CAN NEVER BE FATHOMED
2. A LIFE THAT CAN NEVER DIE.
3. A RIGHTEOUS THAT CAN NEVER BE TARNISHED.
4. A PEACE THAT CAN NEVER BE UNDERSTOOD.
5. A REST THAT CAN NEVER BE DISTURBED
6. A JOY THAT CAN NEVER BE DIMINISHED.
7. A GRACE THAT CAN NEVER BE COMPREHENDED.
8. A HOPE THAT CAN NEVER BE DISAPPOINTED.
9. A GLORY THAT CAN NEVER BE CLOUDED.
10. A LIGHT THAT CAN NEVER BE DARKENED.
11. A PURITY THAT CAN NEVER BE DEFILED.
12. A BEAUTY THAT CAN NEVER BE MARRED.