

THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST

Col. 2:6-23

Good morning! We're on the second part of our series I'm calling "Anchored". In this series, we're looking at how to not be swept away by the flood of problems and difficulties swirling around you. Because admittedly, we're living in a tough world, in a tough society, and it takes a lot of courage to not be moved by the challenges that you face. As I mentioned last week, one way is to be firmly anchored in the satisfaction that Christ gives us. I mentioned how Mick Jagger, like many people, can't get no satisfaction and how the Beatles, like many people, discovered that they can't buy love. Many people are not satisfied with their lives because they don't know Christ. True satisfaction comes only in knowing Christ. Amen?

This morning I'd like to bring this to another level. I'd like to give you another fact that you need to be anchored in. And that's "The Sufficiency of Christ". Our text comes from Col. 2:6-23. This is quite a long passage but I want you to turn to that passage in your Bibles. We're not going to read it through. I just want us to read the first few verses. (Read 6-10)

I stopped in verse 10 because this is the verse I'd like us to focus on. This is our key verse. Specifically, the first part is what I'd like to zoom in. This answers the first question on your outline which is

1. What am in Christ?

Verse 10 says, "...and in Christ you have been brought to fullness." What does it mean? What does it mean to be brought to fullness? I have an idea but it's better to be clear about it. You see, normally the NIV would be simple and quite direct but not so in this sentence.

And so, I looked at other versions and this is what I found. In the KJV, it says, “And ye are complete in him.” Quite interestingly, the KJV explains the NIV. Which just proves to show that it’s all right to use other versions of the Bible especially as they give light to certain passages in the Bible. Other versions say, “So you also are complete through your union with Christ”. (NLT) “And in Him you have been made complete”. (NASB) But this is what I like best, “When you have Christ, you are complete.” (NLV) Tell that to the person next to you.

So, the answer to the question is: **I am complete.** It’s not, I am full. After lunch later, you’ll be full. So, “I am complete” is the right answer. In other words, When you have Jesus, you lack nothing. There’s nothing else you need. Jesus is enough in your life. You need not worry about anything. Just like David who said, “The Lord is my Shepherd I lack nothing.” (Psalm 23:1)

But, you say, “Pastor, you don’t understand what I’m going through. If Jesus is enough, how come I’m having financial troubles? I can’t get a job. Or I’m a Christian but I am sick. I’ve been battling this disease for a while. Or I know Jesus but my marriage is in trouble. My children are astray. I thought Jesus will make my life complete”. Or “I am single. How can I be complete?”

And that’s where the problem lies. Sometimes, we think that just because we have Jesus, we’re already spared the troubles of this world. We regard Jesus as just a means to an end. Paul is not talking about such thing in this passage. He’s talking something deeper than that. He’s talking about the peace and the grace and the joy that we can have even in the midst of difficulties. When we don’t have Jesus, we’re missing all these things. We’re not complete. But more than all these feelings of goodness, Paul is actually talking about our spiritual standing before God.

You see, as we know from the Bible, without Christ we are lost. We are dead in our sins.

The Bible says in Romans 3:10, “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.” In short, we are all condemned to die and be separated from God forever. Something far more significant than is missing in our lives. What is missing? The forgiveness of God for our sins.

But look at verse 13. It says, “When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins”. I’d like to emphasize that. He forgave us all our sins. I did a word study of the word “All” in Greek and, you know what it means? All.

Now, if we back up a little, we see that in verse 11, Paul makes a reference to circumcision. He says, “In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands.” Paul here is referring to the Jewish law that says every Jewish male boy was to be circumcised on the eighth day as commanded by God. It was a covenant that was originally made by God with Abraham and his descendants to signify that they belong to God. It applies only to Jews. But Gentiles who wanted to convert to Judaism needed to be circumcised as well. So, Paul here is saying that physical circumcision is not a requirement for any believer in Christ. What is now circumcised is the heart, not the flesh. Paul says in Romans 2:29, “But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.” The heart is circumcised in the sense that all sins that reside in the heart are removed by Jesus. In short, he forgives our sins, sins that render us dead spiritually, and when we’re forgiven, it automatically results in us becoming alive spiritually. We’re no longer condemned to die. He did it by dying on the cross for us.

“...having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.” (v. 14).

So, if you believe what Jesus Christ has done for you and you received him in your heart as your Lord and Savior, you are complete. You are alive. You are on your way to heaven. And on earth, Jesus promised to give you his peace and grace. He says in 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.” Then also, his grace will help you go through any difficulty you’re having whatever it may be.

The apostle Paul himself was a recipient of God’s grace. He talked about a thorn in his flesh which he asked God to take away from him. But God did not answer his prayer. Apparently, God did that to keep him humble. So, Jesus tells him in 2 Cor. 12:9. This time let’s open our Bibles to that verse. It says “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Afterwards, he became content with that knowing that Christ was sufficient for him. In fact, he felt stronger than ever because it was God working in him and through him. He continues, let’s look again in verse 9, “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

And we know God used him powerfully and mightily in many ways to preach the gospel and witness to others about the salvation that God offers to everyone through Jesus.

Is there anything troubling you at this time? Know, first of all, that you are complete if you have Jesus. You see, your troubles are temporary.

But your future in heaven is permanent. As a Christian, that's your advantage over all others. People who don't know Jesus have troubles, too, but their greatest trouble is that they don't have hope. They'll be separated from God forever.

You see, God cares for you because you are his child. He will never leave you nor forsake you. Just believe that he'll come through for you. And you can always expect his love, peace, comfort, and grace to envelop you in your lowliest moments. Jesus is enough for you.

In Philippians, Paul tells us the secret of his contentment: "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength." (Phil. 4:11-13) Let us take our cue from Paul. He experienced great hardships throughout his Christian life. And yet he was content. Because he knew Jesus was enough for him.

So, the Bible gives you that same assurance – Christ is sufficient for you.

However, there will be times when we may not feel that way. There will be times when we may not think that way. Which brings us to our next question:

2. What will hinder me in believing that Christ is sufficient?

We'll find the answer in the warnings that Paul gave to the Colossians. But notice first that it seems the Colossian Christians were a people who were strong in their faith. In verse 5, Paul says that he delighted "to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is." He commended them and, in fact, he encouraged them to "continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness."

He gave them that encouragement because he knew how some sinister forces were at work in the church. So, in the next verse, he warns them,

“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.” (v. 8)

He heard reports of false teachers making their way in the church. These false teachers were saying that Christ was not sufficient for their spiritual well-being. They need to be also steeped in the philosophy of the world, human traditions, and even mysticism. So, the answer to the question is: **False Teachings.**

Now, let me give you a brief overview of the heretical teaching that was infiltrating the Colossian church.

This heretical teaching was both religious and philosophical in nature. On one hand, the religious element was championed by the Jews. This teaching asserted that circumcision, keeping special diets and observing the Sabbath and religious festivals were necessary for salvation. On the other hand, the philosophical element of this heretical teaching was championed by the Greeks, notably, the Gnostics. The Gnostics taught that all matter is evil. Therefore, everything you see and touch is evil. And since our bodies are made of matter; they too are evil. So in order to keep the body under control you must have rules about everything. Since all matter is evil – God could not have directly created the earth. God created angels and gave them the responsibility of creating the earth. This led to the worship of angels as intermediaries between God and Man. And this relegated Jesus to just being another angel. In fact, they didn't believe that God became man in the person of Jesus. They said that Christ was just a spiritual force that settled on a man and then Christ left the body of that man when he was about to be crucified. Since all matter is evil the only thing that counts is the invisible or everything you can't see or touch.

This led to the belief that one could supposedly achieve perfection by progressing through a number of initiations and levels of wisdom in spiritual mysteries. Weird, right?

But such weird or heretical teachings that infiltrated the church are not just a thing of the past. The Bible says, in fact, “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.” (1 Timothy 4:1)

Today, the church is fighting heretical teaching on the same two fronts. On the religious front, people are teaching and saying that all religions are the same. All religions lead to God. It is all right to follow rules and rituals to go to heaven. On the philosophical front, however, we see a different world view. The philosophical attack infiltrating the church today is almost the complete opposite to the philosophical attack that faced the church in NT times. Back then it was taught that everything you see and touch was evil. And the only thing that really mattered was what you can't see and touch.

Today it is the complete opposite. Today it is taught that everything you can't see and touch is evil. And the only thing that really matters is what you can see and touch. We have a name for this – secular humanism. Where man becomes his own God. Secular humanism controls our government. It controls our public schools and our universities. It controls our media. It even controls some churches.

It is so easy to fall in this trap of heretical teaching. When that happens, biblical principles are set aside or compromised. When human philosophy and religious traditions and rules are added to Christ, then we witness the prevalence of ungodly events or situations like abortions, teenage pregnancies,

live-in relationships, same-sex marriages, divorces, alcoholism, gambling, addictions, and a host of other unfortunate circumstances.

Even Christians fall into this trap. When we think that Christ is not sufficient, meaning, we ignore his commands and principles, or we add to his commands and principles, then we experience the same thing as many non-Christians experience. We become unglued. We fall apart. Our worlds collapse. We go into areas we shouldn't go. Our relationships break. We fall into debt. We hurt people. We say things we don't mean. We become sick. And that's a terrible thing.

But let me tell you, if you're in a difficult situation at the moment. And you don't know how to get out of it, just hold on to Jesus because he will hold you together.

Let me share with you a video to show you what I mean. Some of you saw this before but let me show it to you again because it's awe-inspiring. This is a video of Louie Giglio, a pastor who was a guest at one of Chris Tomlin's concerts in the past. Louie talks about Jesus holding us together.

VIDEO OF LAMININ

Folks, because Jesus is in control, he is able to hold you up and hold you together. When things around you seem to be falling apart and you feel that you yourself are in danger of falling apart, remember that, no matter what, Jesus will hold you together all the way until you reach heaven.

So, just become wary of false teachers. There are plenty of them out there. They are offering so many things to add to Jesus. But Jesus is sufficient for you.

And this brings us to the last question:

3. What must I do to remain in Jesus?

Paul gives us the answer in verses 16 through 23. He gives a long list. But essentially, he is saying, “Don’t be deceived. Jesus is sufficient. Don’t follow man-made rules.”

During the time of the apostle Paul, the Judaizers were so strict about rules and regulations. They were teaching that, in order to please God, you must do this and that. Otherwise, you will not be saved. That’s true even today. There’s a pseudo-Christian denomination which teaches that you are not saved if you’re not baptized. And they don’t allow music in their services arguing that the early church didn’t have music. In short, they are legalistic. You’ll be surprised to know that the church that Max Lucado pastors belongs to this denomination. You’ll be glad to know, however, that Lucado is steering this church toward the evangelical mainstream. And he is being criticized by his denomination for that. Let’s pray for him and that denomination. Ok, that denomination is called Church of Christ.

But there is one pseudo-Christian organization that has made a 180 degree turn as far as their religious practices and beliefs are concerned. I’m talking about the Worldwide Church of God. Do you know that church? This is a cult that was founded by **Herbert W. Armstrong in 1933**. They produced a free magazine called **The Plain Truth**. I remember in the Philippines, my sister subscribed to it and I would sometimes read it. This church, just like any other cult which claim to be Christian, don’t believe in the Trinity. To them, Jesus is not God. The Holy Spirit is just a force, like electricity. And they had other weird and heretical teachings although they claim that they believe in the Bible. But the most telling part of their teaching is that they assert that Christians must observe Jewish Laws and all of God’s commandments in the Old Testament. And so, they celebrate all Jewish festivals. They were so legalistic. BTW, they didn’t observe birthdays, Christmas, and Easter, too. It’s boring, right?

Anyway, when he was in his 90's, Armstrong appointed **Joseph Tkach** as his successor. Tkach became President and Pastor General of the church upon the death of Armstrong in 1986. What happened next was unexpected. Tkach gradually abandoned Armstrong's unconventional doctrines. He began to teach that Jesus is God. Then, he started to celebrate Christmas and Easter. He stopped celebrating the Jewish festivals. In the end, he acknowledged that the Holy Spirit is a person, the third person of the Trinity. Naturally, during the period he was doing this, many in the church criticized him and many left. Small competing congregations sprouted. Their number dwindled and their income decreased. In spite of this, he stayed the course. In 1995, before he died of cancer, he appointed his son, **Joseph Tkach, Jr.** as his successor.

Tkach, Jr. continued the work of his father. As denominational president and with the support of several key leaders in the church, Joseph Tkach Jr. continued the doctrinal transformation of the Worldwide Church of God (WCG). In the process, he encountered a mixture of acceptance and resistance from members within the church. External acceptance came from some Christian ministries, but there were also many organisations and ministries who were not convinced the church had gone far enough with its changes to be considered truly evangelical.

Aided by several influential individuals within mainstream Christian churches, the WCG was able to forge positive relationships with other Christian organizations and individuals, such as Hank Hanegraaf, president of the Christian Research Institute and a leader of the Christian countercult movement, and Ruth Tucker, who wrote an article on the changes in the church that appeared in the July 15, 1996 issue of Christianity Today.

In April 2009, Joseph Tkach Jr. announced the organization would be changing its name to **Grace Communion International** from Worldwide Church of God. That was done mainly as a "celebration" of the doctrinal transformation and renewal the church had gone through.

Grace Communion International became a member of the National Association of Evangelicals in 1997. The same year, Tkach published a book, **Transformed by Truth**, outlining the process of transformation in the church.

Folks, that story is real. The transformation of a cult to a Christian church is a modern-day miracle. It is unique. Never happened before. But it happened because Tkach started to believe that Christ is sufficient. He slowly peeled away all the rules and regulations, philosophies and man-made teachings that enslaved that church. Now, Grace Communion International is a thriving Christian denomination.

If you need transformation yourself, please believe that Jesus Christ is sufficient for you. And believe also that when you have Jesus, you are complete.

