

## The Sufficiency of Christ

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One of today's most influential Christian Psychologists said, "The Word of God never claims to have all the answers to all of life's problems" (*Gary Collins, Can You Trust Psychology?; Downers Grove Intervarsity Press, 1988, p. 97*). Of course, the Word of God does not tell you how to do plumbing or electric in your house or what vitamins are better for your health, but when it comes to connecting spiritual living to the events that you are facing in life, the Word of God does give us all the needed information and guidance that we need for every situation we pass through (2 Tim. 2:16-17). It promises spiritual guidance and answers for the soul on how to live a life of meaning and purpose. It informs us that God's life is also sufficient to meet our needs in life.

2 Peter 1:3

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."

The phrase "all things that pertain to life and godliness" is inclusive. Contrary to what Collins concludes and the psychological movements says, the Bible is sufficient to meet all the needs of our soul. It's very interesting that the psychological counseling movement was virtually non-existent prior to World War II. It began in the 1950's and has come to full bloom since then. So, apparently the apostles, early church, Charles Spurgeon, D. L. Moody, Harry Ironside, and millions of other Christians survived without these psychological techniques and therapies. So why do we need all these techniques and new therapies today? Have the times changed, has human nature changed, has the needs of the soul changed, and has God's way of resolving man's problems changed?

Of course, we know that the world, the flesh, and the devil has not changed and God's answers to life's problems have not changed. We find the answers to life's problems in the sufficiency of Scriptures and God. The main question that we need to address today is how do people change? God and the Bible tell us how to change and dealing with life through the sufficiency of God and the Scripture that we find spiritual wellness, wholeness, and completeness. If we want our soul to be healed, then we must turn to the place of healing.

Psychology is an attempt to contradict and override Christianity's way of resolving problems. Such things as human therapies and finding answers to spiritual problems through recovery memory therapy has destroyed the lives and families of people, who entered counseling and were subsequently convinced by their therapists that their problems were due to their past, and that they must retrieve so-called repressed memories to become well again.

The answers to life's problems are not found in modern-day psychology, secular philosophies, humanistic therapies, mind techniques and the mind sciences, experiences which are not validated by Scripture and which lead us away from our dependency upon Christ and our sufficiency in Him. Think of it like this. If a relationship with the living God (Jesus Christ) and His Word was not adequate for coping with man's problems, and we needed the insights of modern psychology to resolve them, then God has left people without sufficient answers for the past 2,000 years, until Freud and company came along to save the day. This is preposterous! Christ is sufficient to meet all our deepest longings of the soul and needs. This is what we want to discover in this study on the sufficiency of Christ.

Where does a person turn for inner healing? God's Word repeatedly claims that God Himself is our healer, sufficient to bind up our wounds and make us whole through trusting in Him.

Psalm 147:3

"He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."

This is the focus of this study. We are going to talk about the sufficiency of God to meet our needs in life through our personal relationship with Him. Today God's perfect and complete provision for our needs is found in the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ, and our union with Him. We are warned not to be taken captive by the world's philosophies and principles, but to walk in the fullness of Christ, Who is to be our all in all (Col. 2:6-15; 3:1-4, 11).

Someone said:

"If our foundations are in place, then nothing else really matters."

Psalm 11:3 reminds us:

"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

If the sure foundation of Christ's sufficiency is destroyed, then we are left all alone on the battlefield, without God's every-present supply and adequacy. We are left alone to fend for ourselves or look to some other cheap substitute to find help.

But God's sufficiency is just that – our adequacy to pass through the most difficult seasons of our lives. His sufficiency or adequacy is there for old age, trials of any age, when the heat is on in life, when everything and everyone seems to be against us, when we are losing our freedoms, and when things have gone upside down in our lives. Beloved, no matter what the future holds for us, we can be sure that God's sufficiency can get us through the difficult times that might be ahead of us. God can enable us to pass through the perilous times that may be in the future for us (2 Tim. 3:1). No matter when they come and what they might be God has a plan for His children to pass through changing and challenging times victoriously and virtuously. It is to experience His sufficiency in our lives, moment by moment, day by day, year after year.

2 Corinthians 3:5

“Not that we are sufficient (*adequate*) of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency (*adequacy*) is of God.”

As Christians, we can find complete sufficiency in God and His provisions for our needs. There really is no such thing as an incomplete or deficient Christian. Each one must grow and mature, but no necessary resource is missing. There's no need to search for something more or something new. Sadly, many Christians are not aware of the truth about our Lord's sufficiency. The church is in dire need of a renewed appreciation of what it means to experience God's sufficiency in their daily lives. Things like bad doctrine, legalism, libertinism, humanism, and secularization, and secularized psychology to name just a few are eroding the foundations of the Christian faith. There are many satanic assaults on our sufficiency in God's power, provision, and promises that He has given to us.

Psychology has been trying to replace the sufficiency of Christ since the 1950's. The word psychology literally means “the study of the soul.” But psychology cannot really study the soul. It is limited to studying only human behavior. This means the behavioral sciences cannot meet the spiritual true needs of people. Outside the Word and the Holy Spirit there are no solutions to any of the problems of the human soul. Only God knows the soul and only God can change it. It's interesting

that the accepted ideas of modern psychology are theories that were originally developed by atheists who did not believe in God. They taught that people alone have the power to change themselves into a better person through certain techniques.

Secular psychology has some basic underlying components.

- Human nature is basically good.
- People have the answers to their problems inside them.
- The key to understanding and correcting a person's attitudes and actions lies somewhere in his past.
- Individuals' problems are the result of what someone else has done to them.
- Human problems can be purely psychological in nature—unrelated to any spiritual or physical condition.
- Deep-seated problems can be solved only by professional counselors using therapy.
- Scripture, prayer, and the Holy Spirit are inadequate and simplistic resources for solving certain types of problems.

However, the Bible teaches that the path to wholeness is the path of spiritual sanctification through our sufficiency in Christ for “our sufficiency *is* of God” (2 Cor. 3:5). We are to seek spiritual sanctification through Christ and not the manmade techniques of behavior modification. Today most secular psychologists follow a new type of Gnosticism and claim to have secret knowledge for solving people's real problems. However, only Christ and the Bible can solve the deep-seated problems of man which are spiritual in nature.

Many within the modern church era are searching elsewhere, outside the character and life of God, outside the realm of God's Scriptures and promises, outside the realm of His power to discover a better way. Beloved, there is no better way! The sufficiency of God is the only way to get through life. The word “sufficiency” (2 Cor. 3:5) literally means God's ability, adequacy, and competency to do anything in and through our lives. The idea is that God Himself is to be our sense of sufficiency, that God is enough, that God is large enough to enable us to serve Him effectively and also get us through difficult times that we face in life. It is God and His resourced that make the difference in our lives.

John Philipps comments in this way:

“Paul had plenty of merely human resources, great natural gifts, on which he might have been tempted to lean to forward his work. He had a giant intellect, schooled and disciplined by one of the greatest rabbis of his day. Even his enemies paid tribute to his learning (Acts 26:24). He had enormous natural ambition, drive, and determination. He had a powerful and forceful personality. He had an eloquent tongue and a persuasive pen. He was a natural cosmopolitan, for he had been raised a Jew in a Greek city and furthermore possessed Roman citizenship. He had a gift for making friends and inspiring loyalty. Paul discounted all such natural assets in his apostolic ministry. He had no confidence in his own human resources. On the contrary, his “sufficiency” was of God. His ability, that is, was in God and God alone. He disclaimed even the ability to think anything right or good. All his knowledge, all his holiness, all his power was of God.”

Psalm 23 echoes the same truth about God’s sufficiency:

**“The LORD is my shepherd** (*God shepherds my life with His care*); **I shall not want** (*God satisfies my life*). **He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters** (*God stills my life with His peace and rest*). **He restoreth my soul:** (*God spiritually refreshes my life*) **he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.** (*God shows the path for my life*) **Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;** (*God sovereignly protects my life*) **thy rod and thy staff they comfort me** (*God sustains my life*). **Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:** (*God strengthens my life*) **thou anointest my head with oil;** (*God soothes my life*) **my cup runneth over** (*God supplies my life*). **Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:** (*God stays with me to the end of my life*). **and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever”** (*God surrounds me in the next life*).

This is sufficiency! It means that God is enough! It’s God who restores my soul (Psalm 23:3) – not the therapies and techniques of secular humanism. David did not run to Maslow’s theories and motivational pyramid which was built upon a five-tier model of human needs, nor did he find a fix in the newest psychology book. He did not have the most recent therapies in the psychotherapy world. What He had was God and found sufficiency and adequacy in Him. There was no reason to look outside God for David ultimately knew that God would lead him, console him, heal him, and take him to glory.

We need to once again soften our hearts to the sufficiency of God operating in our lives and getting us to pass through life with His personal shepherding ministry, His peace, power, and daily spiritual provisions and blessings. Paul did not place his confidence in himself or his own abilities but in the Lord. God is the one who makes us adequate servants and supplies us with adequate resources to live victoriously, powerfully, virtuously in a very dark world of confusion, compromises, and communistic trends. Paul was actually contrasting God-confidence (sufficiency) with self-confidence (sufficiency).

God's sufficiency is the answer to the question found in 2 Corinthians 2:16, "Who is sufficient?" None of us are sufficient to accomplish God's will and live for Him without His sufficient or adequate supply and aid. Paul realized that in his own strength and wisdom, he could accomplish nothing (1 Cor. 1:18; 2:5). It would take God working through Him to accomplish great things for the Lord and to enable him to pass through life's trails and difficulties.

Philippians 2:13 says:

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will (*change your will*) and to do of his good pleasure" (*charge your life with power*).

This is sufficiency on steroids! God's redirects our will and desires to do His will while at the same time empowering us to do His will. We are like spiritual energizer bunnies! These words of God's sufficiency are actually a rebuke aimed at his opponents who were known for their self-reliance. They viewed their accomplishments in ministry as a result of their own skills and insights. But Paul reveals that success in ministry comes from God alone. In every way, for ministry, for life, for trials and hard times, we need God's sufficiency – His adequacy and competency to enable us to be fully supplied for everything we face in life (child rearing, motherhood, physical problems, sickness, heartaches, down times).

John MacArthur said this:

"In the past two decades or so, for example, theology has become more and more humanistic. The focus has shifted from God to people and their problems, and counseling has replaced worship and evangelism as the main program of many churches. Most seminaries now put more energy into teaching ministerial students psychology than training them to preach.

“Evidently they believe therapists can accomplish more good in Christians’ lives than preachers and teachers. That mindset has taken the church by storm. Evangelicalism is infatuated with psychotherapy. Emotional and psychological disorders supposedly requiring prolonged analysis have become almost fashionable. An hour listening to almost any call-in talk show on Christian radio will confirm that these things are so. Or visit your local Christian bookstore and note the proliferation of so-called “Christian” recovery books. Virtually everywhere you look in the evangelical subculture, you can find evidence that Christians are becoming more and more dependent on therapists, support groups and other similar props.

“This shift in the church’s focus did not grow out of some new insight gained from Scripture. Rather, it has seeped into the church from the world. It is an attack at the most basic level, challenging Christians’ confidence in the sufficiency of Christ.”

Another preacher shared this experience. “Some years ago, I was invited to present the gospel to a group of actors and actresses at a Hollywood hotel. That was a different environment for me, but I was thankful for the opportunity to represent Christ to them. I talked for about forty-five minutes, then challenged the people to trust Christ for salvation. Afterward a young man came up to me and shook my hand. He was a very handsome young actor from India, who had come to Hollywood seeking stardom. He said to me, ‘Your speech was fascinating and compelling. I want Jesus Christ in my life.’

“I was thrilled and suggested we go into a little side room where we would have privacy to talk together and pray. We made our way to the room and sat down. Then he said, ‘I’m a Muslim. I’ve been a Muslim all my life. Now I want to have Christ.’ I was somewhat overwhelmed because I had never led a Muslim to Christ and I didn’t expect one to respond so easily to the gospel. I explained in more detail what it meant to open one’s heart to Christ, then suggested we pray together. As we knelt, he invited Jesus into his life. Then I prayed for him and we stood up. I was excited and he was smiling as he shook my hand firmly. But then he made a tragic and revealing statement: ‘Isn’t it wonderful? Now I have two religions, Christianity and Islam.’ Of course, this man did not have a right understanding of the Gospel and Christ’s sufficiency. It’s Christ plus nothing!”

There are many philosophies that are replacing the sufficiency of Christ today. I will name several of them.

## **1. Human wisdom replaces our sufficiency in Christ.**

Colossians 2:8

**“Beware lest any man spoil you (take you captive like the spoils of war – enslave you) through philosophy (man’s wisdom) and vain deceit (empty and delusional teaching designed to trick us – high sounding nonsense!), after the tradition of men (a reference to the religious and ritualistic ordinances which do not align with God’s Word - Mark 7:6-9), after the rudiments of the world (basic, elementary, and worldly disciplines of approaching God on the basis of human performance – religion that seeks to gain God’s favor through keeping rules), and not after Christ” (disregard for Christ, His sufficiency, and teachings).**

Philosophy and philosophical-religious views are a love for man’s wisdom over God’s wisdom. Human philosophy is rooted in the traditions of men and rudiments of the world system (a mixture of legalistic and Gnostic teachings). Philosophy is literally the love of human wisdom which rejects God’s wisdom. For instance, much of Christian counseling today is in name only. It’s not Christian. This is because people counsel with Maslow theories and secular human therapies which are replacing Biblical truth and God’s precious promises. Many Christians are not relying on the sufficiency of Christ. Instead, they are imbibing philosophy (man’s wisdom) on how to live and resolve their problems.

The phrase “rudiments of the world” literally refers to “things in a column” or “things in a row” (such as 1, 2, 3, or A, B, C). Paul may be specifically referring to religion that seeks to approach God through keeping legalistic rules and ceremonial laws which is nothing but human wisdom and philosophy. The ABC’S refer to the kind of instruction one would give a child. Paul is saying this. Although human wisdom is said to be sophisticated, human philosophy is rudimentary, very childish, and unrefined. To abandon Biblical revelation and the sufficiency of Christ for human philosophy is like returning to kindergarten after graduating from a university. Even the finest of human philosophy can offer nothing over the truth of Christ and His sufficiency. In fact, human philosophy (whether it pertains to religion or secularism) hinders us from receiving true wisdom and produces only foolishness, error, and deceit.



Of course, in Jesus Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3) which means that if we want wisdom, we should look to Christ and His Word to receive it.

Psalm 147:5

“Great *is* our Lord, and of great power: his understanding *is* infinite.”

When moving away from God’s wisdom, we end up with man’s wisdom.

The founder of The Jesus Seminar, Robert Funk, wrote:

“We should give Jesus a demotion. It is no longer credible to think of Jesus as divine. Jesus’ divinity goes together with the old theistic way of thinking about God. The plot early Christians invented for a divine redeemer figure is as archaic as the mythology in which it is framed. A Jesus who drops down out of heaven, performs some magical act that frees human beings from the power of sin, rises from the dead, and returns to heaven is simply no longer credible. The notion that he will return at the end of time and sit in cosmic judgment is equally incredible. We must find a new plot for a more credible Jesus.”

This demonstrates how people reject Christ and His sufficiency for salvation and transformation of living and replace it with human wisdom and philosophy.

## **2. Human legalism replaces our sufficiency in Christ.**

Legalism keeps people from experiencing the sufficiency of Christ as it relates to sanctification and ultimately one’s salvation before God. Legalism is when a person attempts to finalize their sanctification and ultimate salvation by obedience to laws. It’s the way of human effort which is opposed to grace alone for one’s salvation (Eph. 2:8-9). Any person who engages in legalism as a means to one’s sanctification and salvation will find themselves missing out on the sufficiency of Christ.

Colossians 2:16 gives this command:

“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days.”

There were those who were saying that Christ is not enough to save you and make you fit for Heaven. You must also keep the old Mosaic laws regarding the particulars about eating, drinking, holy days, or Sabbath days. In other words, one needed to observe and duplicate these things in order to be sure they were saved. I have had various conversations with some who take this unbiblical position. They are adamant about keeping the sabbath day in order to be obedient to God and be sure that you are prepared to meet God someday.

The Bible is very relevant and up to date. Many people are still saying, "Unless you are baptized, catechized, and Lutheranized you can't go to Heaven." Many people will tell you, "Jesus Christ is a good beginning but only if you keep the rules, or follow the rituals, will you'll get there. You must follow this procedure or do this or perform this work." No, it's Christ plus nothing! Don't let anybody intimidate you. How can observing the observance of Passover be considered a means of spiritual perfection and salvation when our Passover is Christ (1 Cor. 5:7) and He lives within us (Col. 1:27)? And why would we demand that people keep some Jewish sabbath law when we have entered into our eternal Sabbath rest and peace in Christ?

Hebrews 4:9 reminds us:

"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."

Acts 15:1 records the basic teaching of legalists:

"And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved."

Of course, this same type of thing continues to this very day. Many teach that a person must observe the sacraments of baptism and the holy Eucharist, that a person must pray and use prayer beads to help others get out of Purgatory. These religious observances go on and on. Many people feel they must observe some kind of rituals in order to get to Heaven. Believing on Christ is not enough. Most churches are full of people who believe their salvation is attached to how often they read the Bible, or how often they pray and go to church. Their confidence of salvation is connected to the fact that they do certain things and pass through various religious rituals or it's based upon how they don't do certain things. Many people are not really trusting in the all-sufficient Christ for their salvation but their religious activities. Satan has them blinded or confused regarding the sufficiency of Christ for salvation.

Colossians 2:14 gives us this promise:

“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.”

The Bible teaches that Christ took the condemning sentence of the Mosaic Law (legalism) away from us. This sentence was nailed to His cross and He bore the judgment that we deserved for breaking the Law. As a result, we do not have to follow rules and regulation for salvation. He has freed us forever from law and legalism as way of salvation before God.

There is a glaring contradiction in the way many present the Gospel today. Although it is touted as a "free gift," many feel compelled to add a host of qualifiers and conditions to it. And here is the truly amazing thing that few object to when it comes. Such an absurdity would immediately draw a negative reaction if the conversation were about anything else other than religion. For example, imagine a car dealership advertising the giveaway of "free" cars. In no time, there would be a line stretching for miles. And then imagine being handed your set of keys with these words, "Here's your free car, just make sure you don't miss any of the monthly installments!!" There is not one of us that wouldn't see right through this type of scam. We would be outraged. We would demand that the dealership take down their "Come get your free car" sign. We would feel as though we had been tricked or lied to. However, for some reason, when it comes to eternal life being offered as a "free gift," the rules of logic change. We don't even flinch when we are told, "Oh, by the way, make sure you don't miss any of the monthly installments!" For many people today salvation is simply like an installment program where we do our part to meet God's requirements for salvation. Sadly, many people view salvation in this manner.

### **3. Human mysticism replaces our sufficiency in Christ.**

The Colossian believers were also being intimidated by people who claimed to have a higher, broader, deeper, and fuller union with God than Christ alone could give. They were the mystics. They claimed to have interacted with angelic beings through visions and other mystical experiences.

Colossians 2:18-19 reveals this to us:

**“Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility (*fake humility*) and worshipping of angels (*false worship*), intruding into those things which he hath not seen (*fanatical dreams - the alleged mystical experience of dreams and visions*), vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind (*fleshly pride - mysticism results in prideful thinking*), And not holding the Head (*Jesus Christ – the Head of the Church*), from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God”** (*faulty doctrine that leads people away from the increase or sufficiency of Christ*).

Yes, we are to be increasing with the increase of God in our lives! This is God’s sufficiency. But mysticism rejects the sufficiency of Christ in the areas of salvation and sanctification by claiming that certain experiences bring them into God’s favor. It is the idea that a person receives direct knowledge from God through personal, subjective experiences apart from, or even contrary to divine and Biblical revelation. Apparently, the Colossian mystics claimed that anyone not having similar esoteric visions (mystical encounters through dreams and visions) were not really spiritual. They had not arrived. They were not part of the elite crowd of super-duper saints. In fact, the mystics turned their experiences into a form of legalism that brought people acceptance before God.

I received an email from one of my friends:

Hi, Pastor and Lois!

“I had a weird dream last night about Berean. We were visiting, and there were tons of new people at the Church. There was choir practice afterwards, and there were so many choirs and so many people participating in them, that most of the people got up and left before the service was over - including you, Pastor! The practices were held outside in the parking lot. Apparently, they were going to go on for so long that two kids were carrying a mini refrigerator out with them. One of the kids had a bass drum (hard to carry when you're also carrying a fridge), so I guess you were expanding the instrumental section!”

Well, maybe there is something to this dream! Listen, God is not guiding us by dreams and visions but by His word and the Holy Spirit. The Gnostics believed that angels directed them in dreams and visions which in return gave precedence over apostolic doctrine or teaching. Like many heretics and cultists down through the

ages, they claim support for their false teachings in visions they had supposedly seen.

Mysticism means that people use subjective experiences (dreams, visions, TM, Yoga), instead of objective truth, to guide them on in life. Those who embrace mysticism actually turn away from the sufficiency of Christ, who alone produces true fulfillment and spirituality in Christian living through the infusion of His life and Christian virtues.

There are many self-appointed prophets today. There are many religious quacks who tout their own dreams and visions with a different phrase, "The Lord told me." This too is mysticism and it preys on people looking for some secret truth that will somehow add to or replace the simplicity of God's sufficiency in Himself and His Word.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Someone wrote:

"Mysticism has caught many Christians unaware. It has thus swept much of the church into a dangerous netherworld of confusion and false teaching. Mysticism has created a theological climate that is largely intolerant of precise doctrine and sound biblical exegesis."

People will sometimes send enormous sums of money in hopes of buying a miracle. By doing this they think they are demonstrating great faith, but in reality, they're showing great distrust in the sufficiency of Christ. What they think of as faith in Christ is really doubt looking for proof. Such weak Christians are easy victims of mysticism's false promises. A well-known charismatic pastor said that sometimes in the morning when he's shaving, Jesus comes into his bathroom and puts His arm around him and they have a conversation. Does he really believe this? I don't know. Perhaps he wants people to believe he is more intimate with Christ than most of us are. Whatever the case, his experience contrasts sharply with biblical accounts of heavenly visions. (Isa. 6:5; Rev. 1:17). Beware of Charismatic mysticism. It continues

to be a problem in the church today and is leading people away from their sufficiency in Christ.

Paul reminds us of those who seek to diminish Christ's sufficiency by emphasizing seclusion and separation from the basic blessings of life. Many believe that asceticism is something that is needed for true sanctification and ultimately salvation.

Let's break down the mysticism of Colossians 2:18-19.

➤ The deception

Again, mysticism means that people use subjective experiences (dreams, visions, and other mystical experiences), instead of objective truth and Christ, to guide them on in life. There is a tendency in human nature to move from objectivity to subjectivity - to shift the focus from Christ to experience. This has always intimidated weak believers and threatened the church.

Today there is a brand of mysticism that is most commonly seen in the Charismatic Movement where Scripture takes a back seat and is a distant second in importance to visions and revelations. This has always been the case down through the years of the Church. When such intimidation came from the sixteenth-century mystical charismatics of Martin Luther's day, the Reformer was very firm with them, clinging to Biblical revelation and the centrality and sufficiency of Christ. In particular, the followers of Thomas Mumunzer and the radical form of the Anabaptists gave great prominence to the work and gifts of the Spirit and to mystical experiences and knowledge.

Their cry, expressing their super biblical experience, was "The Spirit, the Spirit!" Luther replied, "I will not follow where their spirit leads." When they were granted the privilege of an interview with Luther, they gave their cry "The Spirit, the Spirit!" The Reformer was not impressed and thundered, "I slap your spirit on the snout."

Today many Christians say that doctrine divides and therefore promote ecumenically uniting with Roman Catholics who worship Mary and who claim to experience the phenomenon of speaking tongues, slaying in the Spirit, etc. Dear friend, we must not be intimidated by those who would make something out of

experiences, dreams, and visions and claim that these mystical experiences are necessary to be spiritual mature in the Christian life. What we need to become spiritual mature is to know Christ through His Word and let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly (Col. 3:16). Christ and His Word are all-sufficient to guide us, fill us, and mature us, and conform us into a vessel that God can use.

Colossians 2:18 is referring to the Gnostic mystical practices where people worship other spiritual beings (in this case – angels). As mentioned previously, they claimed to have been given dreams by these angelic visitors. It was believed that angels gave the initiated information and knowledge through mystical dreams and visions in order to help them in this life and gain salvation in the next life.

Eastern Churches and Roman Catholics even today pray to "St. Michael" which is Michael the archangel for protections. The Bible strictly forbids the worship of angels. "It is written," Jesus told Satan, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:10). And yet, today there are many shrines dedicated to the worship of Michael the archangel. An entire cult has been built around Michael the archangels in the same way a cult is built around Mary. The Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, is a Catholic cathedral church of the United States in Los Angeles, California.

This is nothing more than pagan idolatry. Another place in Palm Springs is called "Cathedral of Angels, Inc." It is a non-profit organization committed to providing healing concerts of soothing music to anyone in need of comfort, peace, unconditional love, inspiration, and healing through the ministry of angels. Beware of angelolatry! This occurs many times at the Christmas season. Do you look to statues of angels for inspiration and help and assistance? Are you looking to angels for help instead of Jesus Christ? Many people today still claim to have experiences with angels.

I remember being on a music tour and a lady wanted to show me a picture that she had taken of an angel that had come to help her. Well, when looking at the picture I could not decipher an angel, but she was positive that it was an angel that God had sent to assist her in life. Friend, Jesus Christ is given to us and He lives within us. He is our guide, assistance, and sufficiency for practical daily living (2 Peter 1:3).

Some charismatics gave us this story. They said that while flying into Chicago the wings on the airplane were wobbling. They were very scared because of this. So, they cried out to God and they looked out the window and there was this big angel who flew right up and just grabbed that wing and stabilized the airplane wings. A guy up in Idaho wrote an entire book about how angels do these things for us on a daily basis. Now, I know this airplane incident was a lie since the airplane wings need to wobble or else they would fall apart.

Folks, we cannot afford to live in a fairy-tale land. Instead, we need to start trusting in Jesus Christ alone to meet our needs. Paul says these dreams and visions are simply false and absurd (“intruding into those things which he hath not seen”). They are a bunch of lies and we should not be deceived by them. The church has fallen into the melting pot of mysticism today and has become sidetracked from the sufficiency of Christ.

The heretics claimed to enter the invisible world that others could not go and they experienced dreams and visions under the guidance of angels. Today charismatic’s claim to have trance-induced prophetic utterances.

Jeremiah 23:32

“Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord.”

The Gnostics were quick to talk about their dreams and experiences they had, claiming they were lifted out of their normal senses and guided into other realms of thinking. However, Paul says, don’t believe them. Dreams and visions were part of the pre-canon days of both the Old and New Testament Scriptures. They occurred rarely but occasionally, in order to reveal truth to God’s special prophets, prior to the days when the Biblical revelation in both Old and New Testaments would be completed.

Again, there were very few occasions when God spoke through revelatory trances and dreams or through means of miraculous revelation (Acts 9:10, 9:12, 10:3, 10:10; II Corinthians 12:1; Revelation 1:9-10). To hear modern charismatic Christians talk, one would think visions and trances were common during the Bible



and New Testament Christianity. Actually, they were rare in past history and today God no longer chooses to speak this way. Since God has now completed His Word (1 Cor. 13:10 – “that which is perfect is come”) there is no more need to direct anyone through dreams or visions or give out any additional information (“the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” – Jude 3). Today we do not have to rely on dreams, visions, and mystical experiences. God reassures of His truth and assistance for living through the promises of His Word (2 Pet. 1:4; Col. 1:9-10; 3:16; 2 Tim. 3:16-17) and the Holy Spirit applying His Word to our lives (1 John 2:20; 1 Cor. 2:12; John 16:13 – “he will guide you into all truth” – not in dreams and visions).

Even if people have dreams, the Bible does not give any precedence to dreams in the dispensational age in which we live. Those people who are saying that we need signs and wonders and that we need to live in another dimension are always thinking mystically and are missing out on the completeness they can have in Christ (Col. 2:10). Paul says all of this stuff is nothing but sheer imagination at best and at worst they might be courting demons or opening themselves up to demonic deception. One thing is certain, mysticism is not true sanctification is not necessary for spiritual enrichment and growth in life.

#### ➤ The deceivers

Behind all of the deception are the deceivers themselves. Paul speaks of them and adds that the mystics are really filled with pride and ego as they share these alleged mystical encounters (“vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind” – Col. 2:18). In other words, sharing these stories about visiting angelic beings and finding out new information (secretive knowledge) to live by is really nothing but a big ego trip. In general, behind mysticism is a proud person. I have discovered this time and time again.

I recall one time when a man approached me and asked me if I had received the Holy Ghost baptism and speaking in tongues. He was dogmatic that if I did not enter in to this experience that I was missing something in my Christian experience. I mentioned to him about the fruit of the Spirit, but he snickered and made a sly remark regarding my spirituality. This man was “vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.” Most people involved in mystical, unscriptural, and extra-Scriptural practices claim to be better than others and they claim to have something others

do not have. In fact, they will accuse others of missing out on what they have been experiencing.

➤ The demoting

The deceivers actually demote Christ as the all-sufficient answer to salvation, sanctification, and satisfaction in life. They fail to honor Christ who is the Head of the Church (“not holding the Head” – Col. 2:19) in a place of respect and failing to declare that He sufficiently meets the needs of every believer by the phrase “increaseth with the increase of God” (Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:16).

“To hold to the Head” or retain and elevate the head to its proper place means that we as Christians are to live with the consciousness that Christ is our Head, drawing the supply of all our needs from His exhaustless resources. A human body without a head would not function and have life. In a similar way, Christ is the Head of the Church, which provides life and sustenance to it. Spiritual growth comes from our spiritual union with Christ – the Head of the Church.

Jesus said in John 15:4–5:

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”

This speaks of the sufficiency of Christ! Our experiential union with Christ’s life brings us spiritual nourishment and produces fruitfulness (Christian growth and character) in life. From Christ’s life we are supplied with His character, His power, and His mind. You will only find spiritual increase through Christ and His power (Col. 2:7). Let us never forget this as a Christian. If we want to grow it will only happen through our connection with Christ.

What does Christ do for the Church? What does Christ do for you and me on a daily basis?

- ✓ Christ nourishes us (“from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered” – Col. 2:19a)

The word “joints” refers to ligaments in the human body and “bands” refer to what is joined or linked together. Again, Paul is using a human body analogy to point to the Body of Christ (God’s New Testament saints – the Church). He is speaking in medical terminology. The entire human body (bones and organs) are held together by the joints or ligaments, which are parts of the human body that receives instructions from the head (brain). This analogy relates to Christ’s supply and assistance to His spiritual Body, the Church, which is likened to ligaments joined together in the human body. In other words, Christ, as the Head, provides His body (the Church) with the needed spiritual support, strength, and stability, as each member serves their function in the body.

As we use our gift for God and His glory, the needs of the Church (Body of Christ) are met. In short, Christ works through its members in order to provide every need in the body of Christ. Christ is seen as the Head which leads and guides each member in the body of Christ, so we can function together and be coordinated in service and ministry. Everything comes down from the Head so we can experience the increase or spiritual growth that can only come through Christ (Col. 2:19) or as Ephesians 4:16 states: “maketh increase of the body.” Our union with Christ and His supply and sufficiency is what results in spiritual growth and newness of life.

Here is the point. The body looks to the head for guidance and direction. This means that all the members of Christ’s Body, as the ligaments which are connected or tied together in the human body, should find their direction, guidance, satisfaction, and sufficiency in Christ, and not be lured away into carnal divisions and diversions that lead away from Christ. Furthermore, as Christ works through our personal lives, each member fulfills their role related to the Church (Body of Christ) and keeps the body functioning properly as does ligaments and joints.

Of course, Christ as the Head, gets all the glory! The body needs the Head to function and coordinate itself. This means that Jesus is all I need!

You might say, I need an experience, but what you really need is Jesus.

You might say, I need a vision, but what you really need is Jesus!

You might say, I need drink and drugs, but what you really need is Jesus!

“I need Jesus, my need I now confess;  
No friend like Him in times of deep distress;

I need Jesus, the need I gladly own;  
Though some may bear their load alone,  
Yet I need Jesus.

I need Jesus, I need a friend like Him,  
A friend to guide when paths of life are dim;  
I need Jesus, when foes my soul assail;  
Alone I know I can but fail,  
So I need Jesus.”

Have you been getting your direction from the Head or from some would-be preacher, New Age book, or subjective experience? We must allow the Head to guide us, sustain us, and supply us with direction, new life, and power.

Ephesians 4:15

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”

Once again, Paul speaks of Christ as the Head (Leader and Life-sustainer of the Church). Then he goes on to explain how Christ, as the Head, uses each one of us in this Body, the Church, who are tied together as ligaments, to help one another grow and function, as Christ works in us and through us.

Ephesians 4:16 goes on to say:

**“From whom (Christ the Head) the whole body (the Church) fitly joined (framed) together and compacted (knit together) by that which every joint supplieth (the ligaments supply coordination and blood flow to the entire body), according to the effectual working in the measure of every part (as Christ works through every member in the Body of Christ which are comparable to ligaments), maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love (increases the growth and builds up the body, which is the Church, through the members that the Head uses and who also express love to one another).**

As in Colossians, the human body analogy is used to teach a spiritual truth about Christ and His body – the Church. The human body (bones and organs) is perfectly joined together with supporting and life-giving ligaments, which provide strength and blood flow to the body, as these ligaments receive instruction and direction from the head. In a similar way, Christ, as the Head of the Church coordinates and

guides each member (like each ligament in the human body), so they can work and serve together effectively, as a spiritual body, and support each other and build one another up in the body through our gifts. And once again, all the blessing comes from the Head which is the source of every blessing. Come the fount of every blessing! As Christ directs the ligaments to function together (His New Testament saints), great blessing comes to the body of Christ.

Think of this. Just as every ligament is necessary in the human body, so each one of us are necessary in the body of Christ. Nobody is a nobody!! We are framed together and tied together because we need each other's encouragement and gifts. In other words, we build each other up as Christ works through each one of us individually ("according to the effectual working in the measure of every part" – Eph. 4:16).

In this section of Scripture, we see how Christ is working through individual members to build up and strengthen one another ("maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" – Eph. 4:16). So here is the point. If we are going to increase and grow together as God's people, then we will need to rely upon Christ's life from within to provide us with His spiritual growth and guidance ("according to the effectual working in the measure of every part").

Colossians 2:19 once again reads:

"And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God."

The verse also gives the analogy of "having nourishment." The human body with all of its functioning ligaments grows, or is nourished, by the pituitary gland, which is attached to the brain. From the head the human body derives its whole capacity for growth and activity! Paul is teaching that Lord Jesus is not only the goal of growth; He is the source of growth (2 Pet. 3:18). In a similar way, our spiritual union with Christ's life holds the Body of Christ (the Church) together and nourishes the Church from a spiritual perspective, providing His Bride with everything she needs for spiritual and godly living (2 Peter 1:3).

The word "ministered" (Col. 2:19) refers to how Christ, as the Head, ministers to His spiritual body, the Church by directing, sanctifying, comforting, and giving daily grace for living. Christ is the true minister! Where would we be without Christ's

ministry to our hearts and lives today? As a man nourishes and cherishes his physical body, so Christ ministers to His spiritual body, the church.

Ephesians 5:29

“For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.”

As a husband takes care of his new bride, So Christ takes care of His Church. He cherishes us, loves us, and provides our every need. Beloved, we are complete in him (Col. 2:10). I don't need our mother of perpetual help; I need Christ, as my perpetual helper, for He is the only One that can help me!

“I need You, Jesus,  
More and more each day.  
I can't live without You,  
Most wonderful One!

My lovely Bridegroom,  
Oh, most pleasant One,  
Take me in Your chambers,  
Sustain me with love!

Jesus, just kiss me,  
Kisses of Your mouth.  
Grace upon Thy lips is  
So sweet to my taste.

I'm sick with love.  
Thy banner over me is love.  
You have ravished my heart,  
None other for me.

I need You, Lord,  
More and more every day.  
I can't live without You.  
I've been ravished by Thee.”

Song of Solomon 1:2 says:

“Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.”

- ✓ Christ unites us (“knit together” – Col. 2:19b)

A Christ-centered Church is a united church! A Christ-focused church is a communing church – a church that is fellowshiping together. Just as the bones and organs of our human body are knit or joined together with ligaments, so Christ joins us together, into one spiritual Body, which is called the Church. However, this is more than just a spiritual unity; it’s a practical unity that we experience among ourselves, as we serve together in this life.

The participle “knit together” was used earlier in the epistle (Col. 2:2). The ligaments in the human body are the means of unity as well as the means of sustenance. In a similar manner, Christ came to build one Church (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 4:4–6) by uniting us together in Christ, so through Christ’s life, we can be unified in our ministry and service. When Christ, as our Head, is in charge of our hearts and lives, we will find ourselves united together in truth and unity. We won’t be nitpicking, backbiting, grumping, growling, or kicking against the pricks (goads). We will find ourselves serving together, standing together, loving together, living together, and seeing souls saved together. Whenever I gossip, I am no longer allowing my Head (Jesus Christ) to run my life. Whenever I seek to destroy the work of God, the Head is not being honored!

- ✓ Christ builds us (“increaseth with the increase of God” – 19c)

Ephesians 4:16 also states the same truth when it stated: “maketh increase of the body.” Christ, not man, is the builder of the Body – His Church. This is not only true numerically but also spiritually. Only Jesus Christ, who is God, can change a person’s life forever and see them grow into something that will glorify God. Jesus Christ is in the building business! Let us never forget this! He is the builder and life changer. If I’m not increasing – I’m decreasing! If I’m not growing, then I’m stumbling. Will you allow Christ to change you and build (Col. 2:7) you and grow into what He wants you to be? Will you surrender to Him and give Him your all?

#### **4. Human asceticism replaces our sufficiency in Christ.**

One Sunday morning a preacher was about to finish preaching when suddenly a man approached the pulpit yelling at the top of his voice, “I have something to say. I have something to say!” Before the ushers could escort him out, the tape recorder

picked up what he shouted to the congregation: “You people are religious phonies—materialistic hypocrites. If you really loved God you’d get rid of your cars and your fancy houses and give all that you have to the poor. You’d serve God in poverty like Jesus did.” This was his view of spirituality, and he wanted everyone to know it.

Of course, this view of spirituality is not uncommon at all. It’s called asceticism, and it has threatened the church for centuries. In fact, it was another heretical teaching that Paul warned the Colossian Christians to avoid.

Colossians 2:20-23

**“Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ** (*we have died to the old person that we once were enslaved to sin*) **from the rudiments of the world** (*the elementary principles and primary components of the Gnostic teachings which were a mixture of legalism, mysticism, and asceticism*), **why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances** (religious decrees which involve ascetic practices), **(Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;)** **after the commandments and doctrines of men?** (*man’s decrees – not God’s commandments*) **Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility** (*false worship and humility*), **and neglecting of the body** (*giving up the comforts of society and the body to earn God’s forgiveness and favor - asceticism*); **not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh”** (*false standards of spirituality and self-styled asceticism have no value for they cannot satisfy the flesh*).

The problem here is asceticism (self-denial and self-torture of the body). Asceticism involves giving up certain comforts in society as an attempt to gain spirituality and salvation before God. Many times it would involve torturing the human body in some fashion. It is the belief that through self-denial or self-torture, man can achieve a higher state of holiness and acceptance before God.

An ascetic is someone who lives a life of rigorous self-denial as a means to earn forgiveness from God. Asceticism is motivated by pride rather than humility, and it is an attempt to accomplish in the energy of the flesh a right relationship with God, which can only occur by a divine transformation through faith in Jesus Christ.

People today who practice asceticism in various forms and ways will often fall into immorality for they discover that this false spirituality does not provide true



satisfaction and sufficiency for living. Let's bring this up to date. Asceticism says you can't drink tea or coffee as the Mormons teach. You can't have a tractor with rubber tires! However, you can have a wagon with rubber tires. You can't have a car that is red. It must be black. You can't wear a certain color. You must wear a certain type of clothing so God will favor you and accept you. Asceticism! Beware of this. If you think you can give up the comforts of society, change your clothing, give up certain colors, or refuse to marry or eat something, in order for God to approve of you and accept you, then you are deceived! It's Christ that brings us acceptance before God – not our colors, cars, clothing, or our culture.

1 Corinthians 8:8

“But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.”

I once had a cultist woman ring my doorbell and say to me, “I can tell that you eat meat.” I wanted to play her game and replied, “I can tell you don't eat meat.” We must remember that God created sex, food, drink, and the natural desires to have these things. Sin occurs through their abuse, not by their nonuse. All of these ascetic practices are nothing more than a display of man's wisdom and not God's wisdom about salvation and justification before God. Man has his own wisdom, but it has nothing to do with God's wisdom about salvation, justification, and eternal life. You may think that you can give something up so God will accept you in the end. But this is your mindset – not God's wisdom on the matter.

How much asceticism does it take to get to Heaven? The answer is this – none! Christ is the way to Heaven (John 14:6).

Notice Paul's progression of thought and teaching from Colossians 2:20-23.

➤ Death to the old way of life

Paul begins by reciting our death to the old way of life. “He says that “if ye be dead with Christ” (Col. 2:20) we must no longer be enslaved to worldly philosophy and practices which run contrary to the truth and personal faith and growth in Christ. Since Christ has set us free from the world, we no longer must be enslaved by the rules and regulations of men which stem from the worldly philosophy. This would include the practices of asceticism.

➤ Freedom from the old way of life

Paul calls these worldly ascetic philosophies and ideas the “rudiments of the world.” Here this expression means we have freed from the basic components of worldly living which in this context would include ascetic legalism which means isolating oneself from the comforts and blessings of societal living, inducing hardship on oneself, in order to promote sanctification and in the end merit or gain one’s salvation. The word “ordinances” (decrees and statues) is not referring to the ordinances in our borough or district. They are referring to the ascetic laws and regulations which the Gnostics were promoting among the people.

The Christians were to resist human dogmas which stem from a worldly system of legalistic, self-righteousness (Titus 3:5) and which were brought into the church under the disguise of submission and humility. If Christ paid the full penalty for our sins and has brought us into a perfect standing before God forever, based upon His imputed righteousness, then why would you need to follow certain ascetic and legalistic practices in order for God to accept you?

Living a life of seclusion (asceticism) is rooted in several areas.

✓ Commandments of men (“after the commandments and doctrines of men”)

Jesus taught something similar in Mark 7:7-8:

“Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.”

You can take your pots and pans with you to hell! But I choose to trust in Christ who saved me by His absolute grace and gives me a righteous standing in God’s presence forever. In other words, these commandments are manmade have nothing to do with God’s true moral commandments. Some illustrations are supplied by the translators (Touch not; taste not; handle not). These manmade commands refer to such things as sexual abstinence (“touch not”) in the marriage relationship which is imposed on people for religious reasons. Elsewhere ascetic restrictions are imposed when preventing marriage (“forbidding to marry” - 1 Tim. 4:1-3). These manmade ordinances refer to the taboos of eating certain foods which were

considered unclean or handling certain items which were deemed worldly and condemning.

✓ Carnal living

The carnality of asceticism is described in five ways.

a. Displaying wisdom (“a show of wisdom”)

This sounds like our “Showtime Christianity” which is part of the modern-era of the church today. All of these ascetic practices are nothing more than a display or show of man’s wisdom and not God’s wisdom in regard to sanctification and justification before God. Man has his own wisdom, but it has nothing to do with God’s wisdom about salvation, justification, and eternal life (1 Cor. 1:30). You may think that you can give something up so God will accept you in the end. But this is your mindset – not God’s wisdom on the matter. You are deceived!

b. Depraved worship (“in will worship”)

“will worship” means a voluntary acetic lifestyle that a person prescribes for himself (self-made discipline, self-made religion, self-imposed worship) which is contrary to the nature of truth and faith. Therefore, ascetic works are depraved in their makeup and performance. These self-imposed restrictions originated within the human will and not from divine revelation or truth. They are an example of human depravity and sinfulness.

c. Defective humility (“and humility”)

These kinds of ascetic practices mentioned here produce, in those who practice them, a defective type of humility, since it is a false show of humility based upon human commandments instead of God’s perfect righteousness. It is not true humility but an outward show of prideful display.

d. Depriving the body (“neglecting of the body”)

This is talking about torturing or punishing the body in some specific fashion. It can refer to the denial of sleep, self-imposed beatings, fasting, and many other oddities

that involve an adverse impact upon the human body. Some people think it is spiritual to give up vaccines and medicines. Others believe that if they put their body through some kind of vigorous religious routine that God will somehow accept them in the end. Paul is saying, “Stop it! Stop all the sinister torture, silly commandments, and self-denial.” Dear friend, it’s Christ who will get you to Heaven and Christ alone. If you want to be free, then just trust in Christ. Thank God we can live free from all these things! We don’t have to follow religious codes and acetic practices – we can trust in Christ!

e. Defeat (“not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh”)

The word “honour” conveys the idea of value or price and means that ascetic, legalistic practices have no value. This is because they can never satisfy the flesh (old nature that still resides within). Asceticism does not satisfy the old nature or exterminate the old fleshly desires within us. It can’t bring us victory and spiritual growth – only defeat!

Some people think that if they live a more secluded life that it will cure the bite and sting of the old nature. But they are wrong. Do you know why? It’s because the old nature cannot be silenced and hidden behind ascetic practices. Wherever you go and whatever you do, the old nature still resides within you. It lives on seeking to defeat our lives. Ask the Amish and Older order of Mennonites which are very abundant in the area where I live (Lancaster County). Asceticism does not satisfy or put out the flame of the old sin nature.

Ascetic practices have no value in restraining sensual indulgence. Asceticism does not satisfy the old nature or exterminate the old fleshly desires within us. It cannot bring us victory – only defeat! Denying the body of natural God-given desires merely arouses the desires, as is well known by many who have tried to lose weight by sticking to rigid diets. You can go live on island all by yourself and still commit many sins. Do you know why? It’s because your old nature will also be on the island! Only Christ and His power can deliver you from sin’s power. Mere harshness to the human body and ascetic practices cannot solve the sin problem and satisfy the flesh. This is because the root of our problem lies from within – not without.

Commenting on the futility of asceticism, the nineteenth-century Scottish preacher Alexander McClaren wrote, “They will rather stick hooks in their backs and do the

‘swinging poojah’ (religious acts and ceremonial forms of worship) than they will give up their sins and yield up their wills.” Of course, there is only one thing that will bring our old nature into subjection and that is the power of the indwelling Christ.

If you are unsaved today, stop playing with your asceticism, thinking that giving up certain comforts will somehow make you right before God. Dear friend, trust in Christ alone who died in your place and arose again the third to give you eternal life. Fasting and formulas won’t sanctify you or save you! As believers, we must ask ourselves if Christ is preeminent in our lives? Are we drawing on His spiritual power or depending on some man-made “religious” substitute or gimmick? In true Christianity asceticism and legalism is replaced by love (love for Christ), rules are replaced by relationship (a relationship with Christ) and codes are replaced by Christ (faith in Christ for salvation and sanctification).

So, Paul is saying, "Look, don't let anybody tell you that it's Christ plus some human stuff, Christ plus some rituals and rules you have to keep in order to reach sanctification and Heaven." Do you realize that the world of today is full of people who believe in Jesus but don't think He's enough for salvation, enough sanctification, and enough for true satisfaction in life? Most people endeavor to find all the answers to all of life's issues by following human wisdom so they can obtain a certain level of feeling secure and be acceptable before God? There are millions upon millions of people who are up to their eyeballs in worldly religions, cults, the occult, and branches within Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant, which look past Christ and miss the sufficiency that can only be found in Him regarding salvation, transformation, and fulfillment in life.

Are you resting, trusting, living and even facing death in the confidence of the sufficiency of Christ? Are you? Is Jesus Christ everything to you? Is it really Christ plus nothing in your life?

##### **5. Human entertainment replaces our sufficiency in Christ.**

This one does not appear in Colossians, but it is worthy to mention.

Acts 2:42 says this of the early church:

“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

The Bible does not say that they continued in their entertaining rock music, their worldly methodologies, and ear-tickling preaching. Jeremiah 5:31 says, “and my people love to have it so.” I think this is a true assessment on what is happening today among many evangelicals. Many people, including Christians, are flocking to churches for entertaining music and preaching. They want the thrill of theatrics and worldly entertainment to captivate them, ring their bell, and motivate them, thinking that these things will somehow fulfill them and get them through life. Religious entertainment is a replacement for the sufficiency of Christ.

Yes, another evidence that many are losing confidence in Christ's sufficiency is the church's increasing fascination with entertainment and worldliness in general. Secularized counseling is not the only program that has taken the place of Bible teaching, fellowship, communion, and prayer as the chief activities of church life. Now, in addition, many churches have de-emphasized preaching and worship in favor of entertainment somehow believing they must lure converts by appealing to their fleshly interests. It's as though Christ Himself is in some way inadequate to change the lives of people. Therefore, many church leaders now believe they must excite people's flesh and fancies in order to win them.

Tozer concludes by saying:

“The church that can't worship must be entertained. And men who can't lead a church to worship must provide the entertainment. That is why we have the great evangelical heresy here today - the heresy of religious entertainment.”

## **6. Human pragmatism replaces our sufficiency in Christ.**

Pragmatism is the efforts of man to use worldly methods to win people to Christ. The error of pragmatism is that it regards methodologies that seemingly “work” as more important and more viable than those that are Biblical or in harmony with Scripture. The pragmatist starts with the question, “What do the unchurched want?” and builds his strategy to reach people from this perspective. However, a person should ask this question: “What does Scripture teach about church ministry?” and then follow God's Biblical pattern.

Pragmatism attacks the sufficiency of the Gospel and God's Word in evangelism. It is marketing the Gospel, disguising it, toning it down, making it acceptable to unbelievers. But it is the Gospel that is the power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). Furthermore, to teach or imply that human techniques can bring someone to Christ is contrary to Scripture because it denies the sovereign work of God's grace upon the souls of people (John 6:37, 44). Those who substitute entertainment for a clear proclamation of the truth are in conflict with God's design for the church

1 Corinthians 2:3-4

"And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

The power of the Gospel and God's grace is what brings people to Christ – not pragmatism and fulfilling the needs of people through the marketing techniques of man. Worldliness does not win souls to Christ. It's the Spirit of God that touches the heart of man and saves him (John 3:8; 16:7-8; 2 Thess. 2:13). So, the sufficiency of God is directly related to person's salvation. Salvation is of the Lord! Pragmatism creates a false sense of independence and self-sufficiency that centers upon human solutions to life's problems and winning people to Christ.

We have seen from the book of Colossians and many other texts of Scripture that the Bible presents Jesus Christ as being sufficiency to resolve our problems, enlighten our lives, and empower and change us. This is why Jesus Christ should be the center of our lives. It's because Jesus is enough!

“When life is not what I want it to be,  
When troubles surround me like the waves of the sea,  
When just getting by is a struggle for me,  
JESUS IS ENOUGH.

When despair and confusion are on every hand,  
When all I receive are complaints and demands,  
When friends and dear loved ones can't understand,  
JESUS IS ENOUGH.

When human compassion seems to fall short,  
When no one can offer lasting support,

When hopelessness seems the only resort,  
JESUS IS ENOUGH.

When health and prosperity fail to abide,  
When the gap between good times is too far and wide,  
When a sea could be filled with the tears that I've cried,  
JESUS IS ENOUGH.

When loneliness, heartache, and trouble abound,  
When joy and contentment can't seem to be found,  
When the "bluebird of happiness" won't make a sound,  
JESUS IS ENOUGH.

There was a poor European family who saved for years to buy tickets to sail to America. Once at sea, they carefully rationed the cheese and bread they had brought for the journey. After 3 days, the boy complained to his father, "I hate cheese sandwiches. If I don't eat anything else before we get to America, I'm going to die." Giving the boy his last nickel, the father told him to go to the ship's galley and buy an ice-cream cone. When the boy returned a long time later with a wide smile, his worried dad asked, "Where were you?" "In the galley, eating three ice-cream cones and a steak dinner!" "All that for a nickel?" "Oh, no, the food is free," the boy replied. "It comes with the ticket."

In one sense, the apostle Paul warned his readers about false teachers who were offering them "bread and cheese" instead of "steak." They were in danger of forgetting Christ's sufficiency and relying on their own sacrifices and self-efforts. We who have trusted Christ for salvation have been assured not only of safe passage to Heaven but also given everything we need to live for Him here and now. Christ has all we need for salvation and sanctification. In one sense, our salvation comes with the "ticket" which means we have access to all of Christ's spiritual blessings we need for our daily living. This is why Paul finally gets to the main thesis in the book of Colossians and speaks of the sufficiency of Christ.

Colossians 2:10 declares:

"And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power."

When the Bible teaches that we are "complete in him" it means that through our union and position in Christ He gives to us everything we need for salvation,



sanctification, and satisfaction for living. This important phrase (“in him”) denotes the believer's vital union with Christ who is our life. You see, our spiritual union and identification with Christ is the secret of our completeness and sufficiency in Christ. In other words, out of our union and position we already possess in Christ, flows our completeness, or the full resource of our spiritual blessings and provisions. The cult at Colosse was offering to “complete” the Christian believers by initiating them into their secrets. Paul says, “Nonsense! – we are already complete in Him.”

The word “complete” means to make full, to fill, to fill up to the top. to render full and suggests a complete and total provision of spiritual blessings and supply in Christ. Through our union with Christ we have the full provisions of salvation and sanctification (Rom. 6:1-14) and. Because of our union with Christ every spiritual need we have is fully met. Possessing Him, we possess all we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). This means that there is no higher plane to reach, no surpassing experience or deeper life that we must discover. Everything is found in our relationship with Christ. Christ is to be our all and all. We are to cling to Him and cultivate our love for Him. This is because in Him alone we are complete!

The word “complete” (Col. 2:10) is actually a nautical term and conveys that we are ready for the voyage of life in Christ (our living union and relationship with Him). This means that whatever you need for the voyage of life you will find in Him. You will not find it outside the person and work of Jesus Christ. So, to be complete in Christ speaks of our sufficiency in Christ! However, as a result of the Fall, an unsaved person is in a sad state of incompleteness. He is spiritually incomplete because He is totally disconnected and out of fellowship with God. He is morally incomplete because he lives outside of God’s will. He is mentally incomplete because he does not know truth (1 Cor. 2:14). However, at the time of salvation we are placed in union with Christ and become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4) with the result of being made “complete in him” (sharing in Christ’s resurrection life). Believers are spiritually, morally, and mentally complete, which means they are filled up and receive of Christ’s total sufficiency and adequacy. This is because they now have fellowship with God and know and experience the ultimate purpose and reality in life.

The Greek word behind “complete” (pleroo) is in the perfect tense which indicates a past completed action with present ongoing effect or result. So actually this verse can be more literally translated "you are in Him, having been filled full, with the

present result that you are in a state of fulness.” In other words, the results of having been filled are perpetual. All of this means we don’t need legalism, mysticism, secularism, and the manmade secular theories of the mind sciences. Paul said in Philippians 1:21, “For to me to live is Christ.” His personal fellowship, power and transforming virtues are sufficient to change our lives, fulfill our lives, and satisfy us.

Pastor Steven Cole explains our completeness in Christ like this:

“When you’re born into this world, you’re born complete. You don’t grow arms and legs later, like a tadpole. You’ve got everything you’ll ever need. You can’t use it all until you grow in age and strength, but you’ve got the whole package right from the start. It’s the same spiritually. You get everything in Christ the instant you’re born again. You’re joined to Him in such an intimate way that Paul often refers to it as being ‘in Him.’ As Peter puts it (2 Pet. 1:3), ‘His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness.’ We may not understand it all or be able to use it all until we grow in the Lord. But we have it all!”

Colossians 2:7 says:

“Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”

When we are “rooted” in Christ it means that we are well-established from a spiritual perspective and stable in our Christian life. When we are “built up” in Christ it speaks of possessing spiritual edification and growth through our dependence and relationship with Him.

Ephesians 3:19

“And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”

Paul is teaching that we have everything when we have Christ, and we are filled with God through your union with Christ.” In other words, through our spiritual union and relationship with Christ, we can experience the “fulness” (pleroo) of God” in our lives. Paul is talking here about experiencing the fulness of God person, power, and all of His spiritual resources within our daily living. This word “fulness” reminds us once again that God fills us to the brim with His person, power, His own

character and virtues, and all of His spiritual resources and provisions. We lack nothing. We are complete in Christ, fully furnished and find our sufficiency in Him.

I remember reading about Oral Roberts. One day he said that the devil came in his room while he was lying in bed. And the devil got both hands on his neck and the devil was trying to strangle him to death. It was so bad he had to call Evelyn (his wife) to come and get the devil off him. So he called her and she came and got rid of the devil. Folks, if this is true, we should forget about Christ. We should call Evelyn. Why do people pursue strange things and claim to have these experiences? It's because somewhere in their theology they have bought into the fact that it's not enough to have Christ.

The popular thing in the Charismatic Movement is that if a person does not send in their money and activate their faith, they are not going to get a miracle. We should not be intimidated and buy into all of this hocus pocus. People say that it takes faith to send money into faith healers. However, it's not great faith; it's great distrust in the sufficiency of Christ to meet your need. When you distrust Christ's sufficiency and move into mysticism, you become attached to a very dangerous environment. The environment of human imagination is dangerous enough but when it gets tangled up with the demonic forces of the other world, it's even more frightening.

John 1:16

“Of His fulness we have all received, and grace upon grace.”

The word “fulness” (pleroma) is basically the same word and concept of “complete” (pleroo) for it speaks of Christ's abundance and sufficiency. The complete provision and sufficiency of Christ for daily living is evidenced as he supplies “grace upon grace” upon our lives, accumulated grace, which means He gives one expression of sustaining and life-changing grace after another to maintain our spiritual life and stability.

“He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater  
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase  
To added affliction He addeth His mercy  
To multiplied trials His multiplied peace  
His love has no limit, His grace has no measure  
His pow'r has no boundary known unto men  
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus  
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.”

So, every Christian is what someone termed as “a self-contained treasury” of divinely bestowed spiritual blessings. There is nothing more, no great secret, no ecstatic experience, no entertainment, no hidden spiritual wisdom, or no mystical experience that can take Christians to some higher plane within their spiritual life. It is Christ and Christ alone (His power, virtues, character and life being transferred to us) that allows us to live a life of fulfillment and victory. We lack nothing in Christ! Nothing! We have a complete and final salvation, complete victory, complete power, and total spiritual provision for daily living.

Are you resting and trusting in the sufficiency of Christ? Is Christ everything to you? If so, thank Him for His fullness. If not, perhaps you’ve been trusting in human wisdom, meaningless religious rituals, religious entertainment, or some kind of mystical experience formed in your own mind and unrelated to reality. Maybe you’ve been thinking that your own self-denial or self-imposed pain will somehow gain favor with God. The wonderful thing is this. When we understand our completeness in Christ, we will not need anything but Christ and His spiritual provision. We will trust in His sufficiency and find our completeness in Him and His provision of salvation and sanctification.

I remember going in to my first-grade classroom. The first think I remember seeing was the letters at the top of the blackboard. They were the letters from A-Z. I saw all those letters and I was scared stiff. I knew I was in for trouble. As I think of those letters, I can relate them to this blessed truth. In Christ, we have everything that we need, everything from A-Z! Nothing is missing. Nothing is lacking. Nothing needs improvement. We are complete in Christ (Col. 2:10). Christ is sufficient to meet all of our needs. He is enough for our salvation, sanctification and our suffering - our trials, our hurts, and all of our needs!

“Hide me O my Savior,  
Hide, till the storm of life is past...  
Other refuge have I none,  
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee...  
Thou, O Christ, art all I want,  
More than all in Thee I find...  
Plenteous grace with Thee is found.”

Spurgeon gives a good definition of our completeness. He says we are (1) Complete without the aid of Jewish ceremony. (2) Complete without the help of philosophy. (3) Complete without the inventions of superstition. (4) Complete without human merit. Again, the word “complete” means to make full, to fill, to fill up to the top. to render full and suggests a complete and total provision of spiritual blessings and supply in Christ. We are literally overflowing with Christ’s provision and sufficiency. This is what the word “complete” means. It speaks of having no deficiency. It points to our total provision for salvation, sustaining power, serenity, and satisfaction in life through Christ’s work and abiding presence. We are complete in Jesus Christ. You cannot add anything to this! You can’t add anything to everything!

Christ has done everything for us and should be everything to us today in our Christian lives. He is all we need. He is everything we will ever need for salvation, sanctification, spirituality, service, strength, and satisfaction. Christ saves us, satisfies us, sanctifies us, and supplies us with everything we need.

“Complete in Thee—each want supplied,  
And no good thing to me denied;  
Since Thou my portion, Lord, wilt be,  
I ask no more, complete in Thee.”

I find completeness in Christ in my personal walk, relationship, dependence, and satisfaction through Him. I find that Christ is my Friend that is faithful and true, the One who is always honest and the One who will never let me down. Yes, we are complete in Christ. Have you been acting like it, living like it, depending on your sufficiency in Christ? One radio announcer used to ask: “How in the world are you doing?” How are you doing in life? What kind of life have you been living? Do you doubt your salvation? Has the devil been working you over? Have you been experiencing victory? If not, it’s because you are not applying your riches in Christ. You are complete in Him – He is your salvation and victory. Trust in Him, live by His power, let him change your character and conduct.

This fullness or completeness (the sufficiency of Christ) has been promised to the Church, applied to the Church, and should be experienced by the Church today. Our sufficiency in Christ is a New Testament concept since Christ had not yet come during the Old Testament. The Bible expression of completeness means that Christ becomes everything FOR us and everything TO us! I can’t be saved without Him, I

can't be sanctified without Him, I can't be satisfied without Him. I can serve effectively without Him. I can't be spiritual without Him. I need His fullness and completeness operating in my life.

One preacher shares this interesting story. "I remember on a Sunday night a young man came here after I preached and spoke to me and told me this personal testimony. He was a jazz drummer and he had gone on that very morning, Sunday morning, to his Catholic Church. And he had felt tremendous guilt over sins.

"And as a Catholic he felt the way to get relief from guilt was to go to confession. And so he went and asked that a priest would go in the booth and hear his confession. And he confessed all of his sins. And he said, 'I want to be delivered from the guilt of these.' And the priest said, 'Take your beads,' and I think it was the number 35, 'go say 35 Hail Marys.'

"So he went over to the altar and he said to me, 'I said several Hail Marys, and I stood up and I took my beads and I threw them as hard as I could and as far as I could across the church and walked out.' Somehow in the wonderful providence of God, he found his way to the service here on that Sunday night, heard the message of Jesus Christ and was wonderfully saved. And he said to me, he said, "I knew that all of that was doing nothing to deal with the guilt of my sin."

You see, it wasn't that he didn't believe in Christ's death, it was that he was told that Christ was not enough, Christ was not sufficient to save his soul, that you couldn't just expect Christ to forgive your sin, you had to do something, something religious. This is so prominent in ceremonial ritualistic systems, in self-righteous works systems. People who are told to believe in Christ and then told to try to earn their way into Heaven.

Beloved, don't let anybody tell you that it's Christ plus your prayer beads, Christ plus your candles, Christ plus your baptism, Christ plus the sacraments, Christ plus your holy underwear, like Mormon people wear, Christ plus service, Christ plus observing the seventh day of the week, Christ plus fasting, or Christ plus anything! It's Christ plus nothing! Colossians 2:10 says, "And we are complete in him." This means we don't need anything else but Christ to save us and get us to Heaven. Neither do we need anything else to sanctify us.

Colossians 2:13 summarizes our sufficiency in Christ this way:

“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened (made alive) together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.”

Let me tell you how we were saved and how we also live the Christian life. It is summed up in three words – “Together with Him!” We are not only saved (born again) by sharing Christ’s life but we are sanctified by sharing Christ’s life. I’m amazed at how often we live defeated. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves! We live with bad attitudes, unforgiving spirit, and in depression when we can experientially on a daily basis live together with Him!

You are either dead or alive! The one who believes in Christ can say, “I live “Together with Him! Together we share His life and are born again.” If we have Christ, we can sing these words:

“Tis done, the great transaction’s done,  
I am my Lord’s and He is mine;  
He drew me and, and I followed on,  
Charmed to confess the voice divine.”

What does it mean to be saved and sure of Heaven? It means to be in Christ for it is here where we find His sufficiency for salvation!

Philippians 3:8-9 declares:

“Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win (gain) Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

I’d much rather be found in Christ than find myself in hell someday.

Romans 8:1 adds:

There is therefore now no condemnation (no future judgment) to them which are in Christ Jesus (position of saved people), who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (practice of saved people).

The practice flows out of the position (one's salvation) – the practice does not create the position (one's salvation). What does it mean to be saved. It means to be “in Christ” which is sharing a union with Christ and therefore possessing a position in Him – a position of acceptance before the Father, a position of forgiveness, justification, peace and perfection. In Christ I receive all of Christ's saving benefits from sin's penalty and power.

2 Timothy 2:10 declares:

“Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. Yes, we are “complete in him” – complete in the saving work and person of Jesus Christ (Col. 2:10).

“Complete in Thee! no work of mine  
May take, dear Lord, the place of Thine;  
Thy blood hath pardon bought for me,  
And I am now complete in Thee.”

Ephesians 2:13

“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh (near to God, fully accepted in the heavenly throne room of God) by the blood of Christ.”

I am thinking of the Grand Canyon. I stood on one side of the Grand Canyon and looked across the great chasm that separated both sides of the canyon. Sin separated us from God (Isa. 59:2) and created a great chasm or canyon between the unbeliever and God. However, when a person places their personal faith in Jesus Christ, the shed blood of Christ on the cross, Jesus at that very moment becomes the bridge that takes that person to the other side and makes them accepted in the presence of God.

In Christ we are complete. God the Son has brought us into the presence of God the Father and God now accepts us as His own child! This is the wonder of the ages! We are complete in Him (Col. 2:10).

“Dear Savior! when before Thy bar  
All tribes and tongues assembled are,  
Among Thy chosen will I be,  
At Thy right hand—complete in Thee.”



I believe that many churches are full of people who believe their salvation is attached to how often they read the Bible, pray, and go to church. Or their confidence in their salvation is attached to the fact that they don't do certain things and they don't go to certain places. Sadly, these people are NOT really trusting in the all-sufficient Christ. Instead, they are trusting in their religious activities.

Paul writes to the Colossians because they were being intimidated. They were being intimidated by people who were telling them that Christ was not sufficient, Christ was not adequate, Christ was not enough to save them. Many people today need to have Christ plus intellectualism, Christ plus philosophy, Christ plus ceremonies (rules and rituals), Christ plus mystical experiences, Christ plus penance and good works, or Christ plus self-denial or self-affliction. These Christians in Colossae were very intimidated by all of the teachings which sought to demote Christ's finished work on Calvary and degrade His victorious work accomplished for them. As a result, Paul writes this epistle to tell them that it's Christ plus nothing.

Several years ago, a newspaper in Biloxi, Mississippi ran an article about an attempted suicide. A young woman apparently thought her life held no meaning, so she jumped off a bridge into the waters of the Mississippi River. A man nearby saw her jump, and without thinking, jumped in after her. It didn't occur to him until after he was in the water that he couldn't swim! His screams for help and flapping limbs caught the attention of the young woman who pulled the drowning man to safety.

The writer of the newspaper article finished with this thought: "It wasn't the gentleman who saved that woman's life that night, it was the woman who saved the man because she had a new purpose in life." What this man provided for the woman was a purpose to live and gave her an opportunity to do something with her life. This is what Christ does for the believer. He gives us the great opportunity to live a life that has meaning, purpose, and significance.

Jesus said in John 4:14:

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

This is completeness. It speaks of sufficiency in relationship to every aspect of our lives. In salvation and receiving Christ's life, we are given an eternal drink that satisfies us forever. We are complete in Him! We have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus – salvation, justification, redemption, regeneration, eternal life, sanctification, victory, peace, joy, satisfaction

Ephesians 1:3 declares this about our sufficiency in Christ:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”

Our blessings and provision are found in Christ (our union or spiritual relationship with Him). Our experience is with Christ. If you want an experience, then experience Christ. Experience His person, sufficiency, and His blessing upon your life. The phrase “all spiritual blessings” refer to our spiritual riches and blessings that we have in Christ – salvation, sanctification, spirituality, satisfaction, serenity, stability. One man said to me that I will never be blessed unless I speak in tongues and have the experience of being baptized in the Spirit. But the Bible says I am already rich in Jesus Christ! I have been already blessed beyond measure! Beloved, don't forget about your riches in Christ! Jesus is enough! His sufficiency should be a living reality in your life.

“I found something that money can't buy  
I found a goldmine beyond the blue sky  
I found the land where I'll look when I die  
I found the Lord rich man am I.”

Ephesians 2:6 goes on to say this about our sufficiency in Christ:

“And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

Yes, we are together with Him! We are raised with Christ and now share His resurrection. This points to the New Birth. We are born again because we share Christ's resurrection life. Bring “raised us up together” with Christ results in our New Birth. We share Christ's life. Also, in a very practical way, we can share in Christ's resurrection and liberating life, as we live in daily dependence upon Him for power. Praise the Lord, we are living together with Him today! Being raised

together with Christ and experiencing His power in our lives today (“the power of his resurrection” - Phil. 3:10) reminds us of the victory we have in Christ.

Connected with Christ’s resurrection is also His ascension. The Bible also teaches that we have also passed through the same experience as Christ’s exaltation (“made us sit together in heavenly places” – Eph. 2:6). This speaks of the victory and authority we have over Satan and all demons!

Are you afraid of heights? I am reflecting on the Grand Canyon once again. I remember being at the edge of the Grand Canyon and holding on the railing behind me while glancing over that giant hole in the ground. It’s okay to be afraid of earthly heights. But one set of heights that we cannot be afraid of is our lofty position in Christ within the heavenlies, the throne room of God’s presence, a position of complete power and victory. The believer is viewed as being spiritually seated with Christ in Heaven before God’s throne sharing Christ’s very own life and victory over the devil and demons. This is a present reality that should have a profound effect on the believer’s life today. Our heavenly association with Christ speaks of a position of authority and victorious exaltation over the enemy (Ephesians 1:18-22).

Ephesians 1:22 concludes:

“And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.”

Every angelic power known to man has been placed under Christ’s feet and since we are raised to victory with Christ, every spiritual power is also under our feet! Why? It’s because we live together with Him! Never again must we live like spiritual paupers! We are victors in Christ since we share today in the victorious experience of His resurrection and exaltation.

I know many people who have been to Bible conferences where the Christian life is taught, and at home they have a drawer filled with notebooks. But they are not doing so well in living the Christian life. Why not? It’s because we need to recognize the one important thing that Paul is saying here: we are joined to the living Christ. We live together with Him! We must rely upon His power, person, and provision to get us through life. It’s not going to be a notebook full of Bible notes, it’s going to be Christ! How close are you to Him? Do you walk with Him? Do you turn to Him in

all the emergencies of this life? Is He the One who is the very center of your life? Are you depending upon Him? Are you trusting in Him?

Together with Him! The failure of many Christians today is that they do not understand and appropriate the riches of Christ to their lives. As a result, they open the door to all kinds of strange influences. Pseudo-experiences, and secularization of all kinds are eroding the foundations of the believer's sufficiency in Christ. They are looking everywhere when they should only be looking unto Christ – His faith, sufferings, victory, and inspiration for living (Heb. 12:2).

A true story is told about William and Randolph Hearst, the late newspaper publisher. Hearst invested a fortune in collecting great works of art. One day he read about some valuable pieces of art and decided that he must add them to his collection. He sent his agent abroad to locate and purchase them. Months went by before the agent returned and reported to Hearst that the items had at last been found—they were already stored in his own warehouse. Hearst had purchased them years before! He never knew that he possessed the rich paintings!

Many Christians are like this as well. They don't know about their spiritual riches in Christ – that Christ is sufficient to meet all of their needs in life through His saving work and their sanctifying and loving relationship with Him. Instead of experiencing Christ, they try and experience and invest in other things to satisfy them and give them meaning in life. Of course, outside of Christ, there is no completeness and true satisfaction.

Jesus said in John 10:10:

“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

“All my life long I had panted  
For a draught from some cool spring,  
That I hoped would quench the burning  
Of the thirst I felt within.  
Hallelujah! I have found Him  
Whom my soul so long has craved!  
Jesus satisfies my longings;  
Through His life I now am saved.”

Homer and Langley Collyer were sons of a respected New York doctor. Both had earned college degrees. In fact, Homer had studied at Columbia University to become an attorney. When old Dr. Collyer died in the early part of this century, his sons inherited the family home and estate. The two men—both bachelors—were now financially secure.

But the Collyer brothers chose a peculiar lifestyle not at all consistent with the material status their inheritance gave them. They lived in almost total seclusion. They boarded up the windows of their house and padlocked the doors. All their utilities—including water—were shut off. No one was ever seen coming or going from the house. From the outside it appeared empty.

Though the Collyer family had been quite prominent, almost no one in New York society remembered Homer and Langley Collyer by the time World War II ended. On March 21, 1947, police received an anonymous telephone tip that a man had died inside the boarded-up house. Unable to force their way in through the front door, they entered the house through a second-story window. Inside they found Homer Collyer's corpse on a bed. This scene was set against an equally grotesque backdrop.

It seems the brothers were collectors. They collected everything—especially junk. Their house was crammed full of broken machinery, auto parts, boxes, appliances, folding chairs, musical instruments, rags, assorted odds and ends, and bundles of old newspapers. Virtually all of it was worthless. An enormous mountain of debris blocked the front door; investigators were forced to continue using the upstairs window for weeks while excavators worked to clear a path to the door.

Nearly three weeks later, as workmen were still hauling heaps of refuse away, someone made a grisly discovery. Langley Collyer's body was buried beneath a pile of rubbish some six feet away from where Homer had died. Langley had been crushed to death in a crude booby trap he had built to protect his precious collection of junk from intruders.

The garbage eventually removed from the Collyer house totaled more than 140 tons. No one ever learned why the brothers were stockpiling their pathetic treasure. Homer and Langley Collyer make a sad but fitting parable of the way many people in the church live. Although the Collyers' inheritance was sufficient for all

their needs, they lived their lives in unnecessary, self-imposed poverty. Neglecting abundant resources that were rightfully theirs to enjoy, Homer and Langley instead turned their home into a dump.

Many Christians today are like these men in that they live out their lives with spiritual junk and miss out on their true riches in Christ. They don't realize that Christ has given them everything they need for salvation and sanctification (Eph. 1:3). Have you been enjoying your heavenly riches in Christ? Have you been enjoying the abundant resources that you have in Christ? Have you been enjoying your great inheritance? Or have you been living with worldly junk and worthless things which take you away from your rich inheritance in Christ?

This brings us to another key verse on the Christ's sufficiency and how this relates to our daily struggles in life.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 also speaks of Christ's sufficiency:

"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

Paul was content with God's decision because he knew that God would supply sufficient grace for his trial. Here we read about the sufficiency of God's grace to strengthen us and enable us to pass through life's trials and temptations. "My grace is sufficient for you." The Grace of God's sufficiency shines in our times of weakness by empowering us and sustaining us in life. Grace is like the sunshine beaming through the storm clouds! The so-called prosperity gospel teaches us that grace is what shelters believers from all difficulties. No, grace allows us to pass through our trials and difficulties triumphantly and contently as Paul teaches here.

I would like to share Spurgeon's own words on this verse:

"The other evening I was riding home after a heavy day's work. I felt very wearied and sore depressed, when swiftly and suddenly as a lightning flash that text came to me, 'my grace is sufficient for you.'

“I reached home and looked it up in the original, and at last it came to me in this way: ‘MY grace is sufficient for you.’ And I said, ‘I should think it is, Lord,’ and burst out laughing.

“I never fully understood what the holy laughter of Abraham was until then. It seemed to make unbelief so absurd. It was as though a mouse feared it might die of famine, and Joseph might say, ‘Cheer up, little mouse, my granaries are sufficient for you.’

“Again, I imagined a man way up yonder in a lofty mountain, saying to himself, ‘I breathe so many cubic feet of air every year, I fear I shall exhaust the oxygen in the atmosphere.’ But the earth might say, ‘Breathe away, O man, and fill your lungs ever, my atmosphere is sufficient for you!’ Be great believers! Little faith will bring your souls to heaven, but great faith will bring heaven to your souls.”

“Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” This is the kind of grace that we need to live above our trials – empowering grace. God’s grace is sufficient for you! This is a hallmark Christian truth for Christian living. However, the average Christian in our culture cynically views this kind of counsel and advice as too simplistic, unsophisticated, and even naive. Can you imagine one of today’s professional radio counselors simply telling a hurting caller that God’s grace is enough to meet their need?

Many Christians have turned away from the rich resource of God’s all-sufficient grace and are involved in a futile and fruitless search for secular help and they are trying to find some kind of false contentment and help in the hollow humanistic teachings of this world.

Jeremiah 2:13

“For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”

Many Christians are re looking for blessings and fulfillment through broken pots when they already have the fountain of living waters in the sufficiency of Christ (Eph. 1:3). One of the Old Testament names of God is El Shaddai, which means “the All-Sufficient One.” It is a name rich with meaning. Those who are close to God find

Him adequate for every necessity of life. They do not need any supplementary experience, an emotional high, or some other to help them through life.

John MacArthur once again states:

“God has given to every believer abundant grace that is utterly sufficient to fulfill our deepest longings, our most intense cravings, our most profound needs—every human requirement.”

2 Corinthians 9:8 also mentions God’s sufficiency:

“God is able to make all grace abound to you (His financial supply and resources), that always having all sufficiency in everything (complete financial supply), you may have an abundance for every good deed” (in sharing financially with the church ministry and sharing with others financially).

This is placed in the context of giving and suggests that we have this promise. If a Christian really wants to be generous, God will see that he is given the opportunity to be generous. Grace is used here as a synonym for resources – God graciously supplying our financial needs so we can continue to give to God’s work and people in a generous way.

Of course, the sufficiency of God applies to every area of our lives (not just financial). By extension and application, God is more than adequate to meet all of our needs!

Philippians 4:19

“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

This is the sufficiency of God! Do we really believe this and act upon this truth and promise by faith? Do we believe that God is always sufficient to meet our emotional, physical, and spiritual needs? Do we rely on Him, go to Him, and fellowship with Him on a daily basis to find His spiritual power, nourishment, and sufficiency?

2 Peter 1:2-3 also points us to Christ’s sufficiency:

“Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power (Christ’s Godlike power) hath given



unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.”

The word “given” (granted) translates a Greek word that stresses something of great worth that is given to us by Christ. The word “power” (dunamis) is one of Peter’s favorite words (1 Peter 1:5; 3:22; 2 Peter 1:16; 2:11) from which we derive the word dynamite. Christ is to be the strength and ability of the believer’s life. Christ is the dynamite (power) for Christian living.

Notice the expression “all things” which means “everything.” This speaks of total supply. You cannot add anything to everything! Everything that pertains to “life” means that every situation we face and deal with, whether temptations, tough times, or taxing pressures, we know that Christ is there to enable us to pass through all of these things victoriously. He is in our life to promote “godliness.” This means that God’s sufficiency is related to living the Christian life, being a godly person, living victoriously and triumphing over sin, as we have an awareness of His presence in our lives (“the true knowledge of Him”).

All that believers need for spiritual vitality (life) and godly living comes to us through our knowledge of Jesus Christ – His life, His nature, His power, His companionship, fulfillment. The “full knowledge” (epignōsis) of Christ is the source of spiritual power and growth. Possessing an intimate awareness of Christ and having a person relationship with Him is the channel of our spiritual blessings and riches. By possessing a full knowledge of who Christ is and how He operates in our lives, experiencing His life in ours, we can find spiritual power and grow in our Christian life (Phil. 1:9; Co. 1:8-10). To know Christ experientially or to progress in knowing Him is also to progress in holiness. The better we get to know Him, the more we become like Him.

Yes, Christ’s indwelling life and our relationship with Him “hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.”

John Phillips said:

“If everything depends on Him, then all is well. We can be glad that it does not depend upon us.”

It seems to me that Peter's point was that Christ's sufficiency and His Word (2 Peter 1:3-4) provide everything that is essential to godly living. Peter's point was that there is nothing else that believers need to become or do than what is already made available to them through Christ. We know that some people, for various reasons (physical or mental), need more specialized help in dealing with some of the obstacles they face in life. Nevertheless, no Christian can get along without Christ's life and His word for them to make progress in godliness.

The epistle also ends with Christ's sufficiency in 2 Peter 3:18:

"But grow in grace (the EXPRESSION of God's favor and kindness = the method or way transformation and growth occurs in our lives today), and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (the EXPLANATION of how grace transforms and sanctifies our lives - it's through the life of Jesus Christ by which grace is manifested in our lives).

The end of the book gives the same truth. Grace, as found in the person of Jesus Christ, His power and sufficiency, is the method God uses to change us. It is through a full knowledge of Christ's character, presence, virtues, and power being experienced in our lives. We are not changed by carnal and unscriptural experiences. Grace changes us through our personal relationship and walk with Christ – loving Him, trusting in Him, experiencing His transforming person and presence. Everything we need for Christian living comes from our relationship with Christ (2 Pet. 1:3). It comes through Jesus Christ - not through dreams, trances, visions, and experiences outside Christ.

Grace is a wonderful thing! Grace at its very core meaning speaks of God's benevolence and kindness which is freely given to us through Christ. The presence of Jesus Christ in our lives is how God expresses grace to us today in transforming our lives (Phil. 3:10), fulfilling our lives (John 10:10), and being with our lives forever (Matt. 28:20). The meaning of growing in grace is to experience the complete and full blessings that you already have through Christ (Col. 2:10), since this is the way grace is experienced and administered to us today.

Today Christians through countless other means try and find knowledge and answers outside of their relationship with Christ. I'm amazed at the places they go and the things they do to try and find the secret for Christian living. The secret is Christ lives within us to meet every need that we have and help us mature and grow

in our Christian walk. I think many Christians are hungry to get whatever might be missing in their spiritual life and they don't realize that what is really missing is their relationship with Christ and His completeness and sufficiency.

I stopped at a convenience store for a drink and noticed all the energy drinks that they make today to keep people fueled up and moving. Names such as High Throttle and JOLT are just a few of the energy drinks on the market. Some of these drinks look like something you should pour in your gas tank to treat your gasoline. However, people like their energy drinks so they can get the dose of caffeine that they need to keep going. Today, many Christians think they can get spirituality in one big dose, in one shot, like a jolt out of Heaven. So they try and pass through some experience thinking that it is the answer. However, it is not the answer! Our daily walk with Jesus Christ is the answer! Some Christians want acceptance and security. What they don't realize is that they can find all of these things in Christ! Christ accepts you unconditionally, loves you unconditionally, and will satisfy you unconditionally. What we need today is Christ esteem!

People say today, "Oh, you have such a deep problem. You better go to a clinic somewhere for help, or get into psychotherapy, or find a deliverance ministry that can bind Satan and cast those demons out of you." Now, I'm not denying that some people have true physical problems and need special assistance. But many times, the problem with people is sin problems and they need spiritual deliverance. What is wrong is when Christians attempt to use secular things to replace their spiritual riches in Christ. They reach for mind altering drugs, tranquilizers, pills, pop-psychology, and mystical experiences that take them away from their completeness and sufficiency in Christ.

What can these things add to the sufficiency of Christ, the living, active, dynamic power that we have in Jesus Christ? We are complete in Him! Live like it. Don't go for the counterfeit! Experience the real thing – your intimate and empowering relationship with Christ. We are complete in him!! Christ is enough! Do you get it? Do you got it? Then, go with it! Sadly, Satan has always tried to beguile and lead Christians away from the purity and simplicity of an all-sufficient Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:3

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

The Greek word translated simplicity is also translated as sincerity (2 Cor. 1:12) and a singleness of heart (Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22). Our “simplicity in Christ” speaks of being sincere and without hypocrisy – unmixed in our devotion and desire to please Christ. It points to an absence of pretense, openness of heart, a mind and heart that is free from all hypocrisy and deceit. It connotes mental honesty without any hint of deceitfulness.

So, the phrase “simplicity that is in Christ” can be understood as wholehearted and sincere devotion or commitment to Jesus Christ. This would include being committed to His sufficiency, the adequacy of His personal presence, power, and promises to meet all of our needs in life. But Satan has always found people willing to forsake the truth of their sufficiency in Christ for almost anything that is new and unusual. Don’t allow Satan to lead you away from your adequate and spiritual provision in Christ. What you need in life is Christ – a personal walk, love relationship, and intimate awareness of His presence, power operating in your life to sanctify you, supply you, and satisfy you.

Galatians 2:20 also presents the sufficiency of Christ:

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

Living by faith in Christ’s presence and power speaks of His sufficiency that is to be experienced in our lives today. The Bible teaches that we died with Christ to the old person we used to be (identification with Christ’s death), but we were also raised with Christ (identification with Christ’s resurrection) which means we share His risen life and power on a daily basis. Therefore, we can walk by faith in His complete power and provision for our lives. This is sufficiency or adequacy.

#### I. The explanation of this relationship

Our relationship with Christ is explained in two ways.

##### a. It’s a death - “I am crucified with Christ” (20a)

Paul is talking about our spiritual union with Christ. The Bible teaches that we have entered into the same death, burial, and resurrection experience with Jesus Christ.

When it comes to crucifixion with Christ, this is actually something that occurred the past tense. The Greek perfect tense speaks of completed action that occurred in the past but one that has present certainty of results in our life today.

“I have been crucified with Christ.” In other words, it’s a done deal! According to the reckoning of God, Paul and every believer who expresses faith in Christ was already crucified with Christ, which results in them being released from sin’s power. Through our death with Christ we have been severed from the old, enslaving relationship we once had with sin. Let’s state it in a simple fashion. Our sins were not only placed upon Christ on Calvary’s cross, but we too were crucified on Calvary’s cross in the mind and plan of God. Christ’s experience has become our experience which results not only in our past salvation but also daily sanctification.

Romans chapter six reveals this spiritual transaction that occurred in the past and which was reckoned to us when we believed.

- The doctrine is taught (Romans 6:3,5) - we are baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection and therefore share in His saving and life-transforming work.

Romans 6:3

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?”

Romans 6:5

“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his* resurrection.”

This is what Paul meant when he said we have been crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20). In the mind and plan of God, we died with Jesus Christ, when He died on the cross. How did this happen? It was by baptism. The word “baptism” in this context speaks of the work of the Holy Spirit placing us into this spiritual union with Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). This is not water baptism but the work of the Holy Spirit that baptizes us or immerses us into a saving and life-transforming union with Jesus Christ which began with immersing us spiritually with Christ’s death and giving to us an important, life-changing connection or identification with Christ’s death.

1 Corinthians 12:13

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”

Water baptism does not get us into Christ, but the Spirit’s baptism does. We are literally baptized or immersed in the work of Jesus Christ. We died with Him and share His death and the victory that it brings into our lives. \*God saw the believer co-crucified with Christ. This means that what Christ experienced we too experienced when dying on the cross with Him. Of course, our water baptism is a picture of our identifying death with Christ but it’s the Holy Spirit that performed this spiritual operation and transaction for us.

- The application is taught (Romans 6:6) - we are crucified with Christ and are no longer slaves to sin.

Again, this is what Paul was teaching in Galatians 2:20 (“I am crucified with Christ”) and also Galatians 5:24 (“have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts”).

Romans 6:6 declares:

“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”

The “old man” is not your pop or dad. It’s the unsaved person we used to be in our unregenerate state, while we were unsaved and living under the power of sin. The old person we used to be was hopeless and powerless. We were a person that could not save ourselves and sanctify ourselves without our saving and life-transforming identification with Jesus Christ.

This old person we used to be, along with our sin nature (Gal. 5:24) has been put to death (crucified) positionally with Christ so that “the body of sin” (the human body controlled by sin) could be “destroyed” (rendered powerless – inactivated, literally put out of business!) so that we no longer must “serve sin” (be a slave to sin).

So Paul says, “I am crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20). My death with Christ means that Christ destroyed the old “I” or the old person that I used to be. Christ’s death on Calvary, and our union (spiritual togetherness or identification with Christ), releases me from the old person I used to be. This means I am no longer “I” (the

old, unregenerate, defeated person I used to be under sin). It means I must no longer serve or be enslaved to sin in view of my death with Jesus. Yes, “I am crucified with Christ.” The “I” or death of the old person severs or breaks our old relationship with the power of sin.

b. It’s a resurrection - “nevertheless I live” (20b)

We not only have an identification with Christ’s death, the Bible teaches we also have been given a new grace relationship through our identification with Christ’s life, a new relationship consisting of regenerating (Eph. 2:5) and transforming life (Eph. 2:10). When Paul states “nevertheless I live” he is talking about his spiritual union and identification with Christ’s resurrection.

Paul had to die to live!! Again, this speaks now of the believer being identified in the resurrection of Christ. Although we were crucified with Christ, we also were raised with Christ when He came forth from the dead. In the mind and plan of God, according to God’s reckoning, this also was true of each believer.

We are made alive spiritually when he is linked or identified with the resurrection life of Jesus Christ. We are still alive physically as we always were, but at the same time we are now made alive spiritually and are given a new way to live, since Christ’s life has been communicated to us. We, who were once spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1-2) are now made spiritually alive with Him (Eph. 2:5). The believer now lives by sharing the very resurrection life of Christ, which to Him becomes not only regenerating life, but also a new way of life.

While believers live on physically, Christ now lives within them spiritually. We have a spiritual bond and relationship with the resurrected and living Christ – a togetherness with Christ. As a result, Christ’s resurrection life and power is made available to us, so we can now live victoriously for God.

➤ The doctrine is taught (Romans 6:5, 8) – we were raised with Christ.

Romans 6:5

“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his* resurrection:

Romans 6:8

“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.”

- The application is taught (Romans 6:4 and 11-13) – we live by His resurrection power.

Romans 6:4 goes on to teach:

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Newness of life is the application of what it means to be risen with Christ, sharing His resurrection. Essentially, it means that through sharing Christ’s life we are born again and now have all the spiritual power to live victoriously.

Romans 6:11-13 further explains the application of Christ’s resurrection life:

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin (identification with Christ’s death – cancelling out our slave relationship to sin and defeating the power of sin over our lives), but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord (identification with Christ’s resurrection – claiming His resurrection life for power and victory by sharing His risen life). Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God.”

Since we have been spiritually united or joined to Christ in a way that we have participated in His resurrection experience, this means that today we share His very own life and have His daily power for assistance. Jesus Christ who rose from the dead now lives within us (we have a spiritual togetherness with Him) to assist us in life by giving us His own resurrection power and granting us daily victory over sin. In Philippians 3:10 Paul said, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.”

Yes, when Jesus rose from the dead and we also were raised with Him, which means that we have been made spiritually alive but also spiritually empowered to live by



His power and claim our victory over sin. Jesus Christ is alive and so are we by being spiritually identified with Christ's resurrection life and power.

“He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!  
He walks with me and He talks with me  
Along life's narrow way.  
He lives, He live, salvation to impart!  
You ask me how I know He lives:  
He lives within my heart.”

There is no other way to experience and live the Christian life. There are not three steps we must follow. There are not three rules we must follow! It's all about Him, Jesus Christ, and the life which I share with Him. I rely upon Him for victory, I cling to Him for enjoyment in life, I live for Him, love Him, and trust in Him. I serve Him. It's all about Him! Togetherness with Christ! This is what living the Christian life is all about.

My wife and I exercise in the morning. When it is cold outside it's hard to keep your hands warm. There always seems to be another glove invented, made from a new material never experienced before by any human being on earth, which is designed to keep the cold away from your fingers and hands. However, no matter what kind of glove I wear, sooner or later my fingers get cold. However, I found the true secret for keeping my fingers warm. I take my fingers out of the finger section of the gloves and actually curl my fingers together to create warmth. Fingers wrapped together create warmth and get you through the cold winter mornings. In a similar way, when we understand that we are joined together with Christ (spiritually united together with Him), we can get through anything that life brings before us.

## II. The examination of this relationship (20c-d)

Two matters are examined:

### a. The past is gone - “yet not I” (20c)

Paul had just said that he was crucified with Christ (his old self and sinful disposition was positionally put to death). So when he says “yet not I” he is referencing what occurred in the past (his death with Christ and the death of the old person he was

under sin's power). The phrase "yet not I" is also contrasted with the previous statement "nevertheless I live" (referring to his identification with Christ's resurrection life). Therefore, when Paul says "yet not I" he is referring to his old self and living. His point is this. Instead of living according to the "old I" or old self, he now lives as a born-again Christian. He recognizes that it's not his old self that enables him to live a victorious and new way of life. To the contrary, it's actually Christ living through him that allows him to live a new way of life. This phrase ("yet not I") is referring to how Paul's past life had nothing to do with his everyday life and victory. The phrase related to the old life ("yet not I") certainly would include the absence of legalism (the way of human effort).

There is something we need to understand. We cannot live the Christian life! This means that on your own power and strength, we cannot live victoriously. Legalism (self-effort without God's power) cannot get you through your Christian life. "Yet not I." The old way of life (the old "I") has no power to enable us to live a life of sanctification and victory.

This is what Paul means when he states, "Yet not I." There is no legalism (self or human effort) in this new relationship with Christ. I can't justify myself before God nor can I sanctify myself in order to live for God. It takes the life of Christ to do this through him to accomplish these spiritual transformations. The Judaizers (legalists of Paul's day) taught that they could be sanctified by observing the Law, through their own human efforts, and in the end they could merit their justification before God. But Paul would have none of it. "Yet not I." It was not Paul, his will power or human efforts that brought him sanctification and justification. It was Christ. It was all about Christ. It had nothing do to with Paul and his old self and way of life.

Legalism (human effort without God's life and power) was connected with the old "I" of verse 19, which relates to the old person under sin's power and slavery. Paul is teaching that it is no longer this "I" which is in control of his life but he is now depending upon the risen life and power of God's Son to give Him victory and change his life. The old man (Rom. 6:6) or person we used to be under sin's power (the old "I") has been put to death. We are no longer that person. Thank God! The voices of a million angels could not express my gratitude! All that I am and ever hope to be, I owe it all to Thee! Thank God that by virtue of my death and resurrection with Christ I am no longer that person. In Christ (through my identification with Him and His life) I am a "new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17). Since we

are no longer the old “I” or person that we used to be under sin’s power and slavery, this means that I cannot depend upon this old “I” to give me victory. It means that no amount of human self-effort (legalism) can provide me with sanctification, growth, and victory.

Living the Christian life has nothing to do with us – our power, our strength, our abilities. There was no “I” left in Paul’s vocabulary! The “I” of human effort and legalism was removed from his life. The old person he used to be was gone (had died) and a new person has emerged.

Augustine was in Milan when God touched his heart and changed his life. He then left his former life of license (he even had an illegitimate son). When he returned home, his former girlfriend called to him: “Augustine, Augustine, it is I.” He turned and said: “Yes, but it is not I.” My friend, has the old “I” been ruling your life as a Christian? Do you have an “I” problem? You don’t need to see an optometrist; you need to remember what Christ has done for you once again! We have been transformed by God’s grace. We have been freed from the old “I” relationship under sin’s power and slavery because of our union in Christ’s death and resurrection. This means that I cannot live the Christian life through the old “I” relationship but only through my new relationship with Christ.

b. The presence of Christ is within - “but Christ liveth in me” (20d)

There is the secret to living the Christian life. It’s not about reading certain Christian books or knowing the newest psychobabble language and definitions. It’s not about listening to great Christian speakers. The secret to living like Jesus Christ is experiencing the life of Jesus Christ in our life. Christ lives within us and we should experience the companionship, power, virtues, and Christlikeness of his indwelling life. The old self-righteous, self-centered Saul died, and the new Christ-centered Paul lives. The same is true for all of us and this should become practical in our Christian walk and experience.

Our new life is really Christ living His life in and through us. It is not a matter of imitation, but one of realization. Christ lives within me! He brings into my life meaning, fulfillment, and victory. The believer’s rule of life is not legalism and the old way of life (the old “I”) - it is Christ and the new way of life (“Christ liveth in

me”). Christ in me is the hope of glory (Col. 1:27) and Christ in me is the hope of a new way of life forever (Gal. 2:20).

Philippians 4:13 states:

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

Someone wrote:

“I may not have this world’s great riches,  
Not much silver, not much gold  
But I have the greatest treasure, Jesus Christ within my soul.  
He alone gives life real meaning, How he makes my heart to sing  
Jesus Christ makes all the difference; Through Him I can do all things.”

### III. The experience of this relationship

It takes place:

#### 1. In the daily grind of life - “and the life which I now live in the flesh” (mortal body - 20e)

- Experiencing Christ’s life occurs on Monday morning when you are going to work and drinking your coffee. When we face another week and need His stability and power.
- Experiencing Christ’s life occurs when we spontaneously worship Him and enjoy His presence.
- Experienced Christ’s life occurs when you are being tempted to look at a dirty picture or listen to some music that is worldly and centered on lust. We immediately rely upon His power to deliver us from the temptation.
- Experienced Christ’s life occurs when you want to develop a fresh start with your wife or husband, through forgiveness, love, and understanding.
- Experienced Christ’s life occurs when you need to increase your faith, joy, peace, and patience in life. It’s realizing that your relationship with Him will steady you through the most trying circumstances that you face.
- Experience Christ’s life occurs when we hit a roadblock in life and we don’t know which way to turn. It’s during these times we must turn to Christ and experience His sufficiency in our lives.

We live today in these fleshly bodies and we need Jesus Christ's personal presence, power, and to get us through life's change and challenges. Maybe you are not making it or doing so well in our Christian life because you are not experiencing the dynamic and life-changing relationship you can have with Jesus Christ.

Colossians 2:10 once again states: "And ye are complete in him." This means I have everything I need in Jesus Christ – every need met, every longing met, every enrichment and enjoyment. Colossians 3:11 adds, "but Christ is all, and in all." This is sufficiency and total adequacy. Christ can change us, strengthen us, and sufficiently fulfill our lives. You don't need drugs, booze, sex, the culture, or anything else. We have Christ. His life is all we need.

I need Christ in the daily grind of life. I need Him this week. His life is real. It's real! Praise God all the doubts are settled, for I know, I know, it's real! Do you know this and experience His life being lived out through your own life? I don't need Dr. Phil (secular psychology), I need Christ. I don't need Joel Osteen (pop psychology), I need Christ. I don't need the newest gadgets, fads, and programs. I need Christ.

Jesus Christ is still the answer!

"Jesus is still the answer  
And though time and ages roll  
Jesus is still the answer  
He's the answer for your soul  
And though some may say  
That He doesn't fit with their philosophy  
I know Jesus is still the answer  
He's always been and always will be."

## 2. Through daily faith in Christ - "I live by the faith of the Son of God" (20f)

The word "live" is speaking about our everyday Christian life. How are you living today? Are you really living it up? I don't mean that you are "out on the town" living the vanity fair lifestyle. But are you experiencing the true Christ-filled life? Are you experiencing the wonder of Christ's personal presence and transformation and provision in your life?

One lady said, “Before the lunch hour rush at the restaurant where I waitress, I recited a memory verse to myself--Galatians 2:20, ‘I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.’ To my surprise, the words that came out as I greeted my first table weren't the usual ‘Hello, are you ready to order?’ but instead, ‘Hello, are you ready to live?’ The couple had a sense of humor and I even had the opportunity to share the verse with them.”

Some of you are just existing in life but you are not really living. The Christ life is an amazing life of transformation and fulfillment. Stop existing and start living! “For to me to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21). Christ is to be our companion, passion, motivation, inspiration, comfort, power, strength, satisfaction, and victory. The true Christian life is not so much a believer’s living for Christ as it is Christ living through the believer. I am to live “by the faith of the Son of God” which suggests that the indwelling Christ is to be the object of one’s faith. We are to live by a constant faith in the Christ’s power, provision, and personal presence for daily living and victory. We are to always remember the importance of the “faith walk” that is related to Christian living.

We became a Christian by faith in Christ (Gal. 2:16) and now we are to live the Christian life by faith for Christ’s daily provisions. Faith in both cases means simple trust in Christ. My entire life is to be one of complete dependence upon Christ. At all times, we are to possess “faith” in God’s Son (Jesus Christ). We cannot advance in our Christian walk without faith. This is a daily faith that rests in Christ not only for salvation before God (justification) but in the context of the Christian life a faith that rests in Christ for sanctification. The Christian is to live by continual dependence on Christ! All my trust, confidence, and faith must be directed to Christ for both my salvation and victory.

I was reading a book the other day and one author revised the twelve steps to recovering alcoholics and Christianized them. Now, it’s true that we can receive help by the guidance and direction of others but I must realize that I don’t live my life by 12 steps; I live it by faith (utter dependence) in the Son of God! I live by experiencing His daily power in my life. I live with Jesus and I know He is there every minute to assist me in life, to give me victory, to calm me, to strengthen me, to provide inner joy and peace for me and to give me the patience I need.

Notice how God's Son is our constant inspiration.

✓ He's the Lover of my soul - "who loved me" (20g)

The whole of Christian life is a response to the love exhibited in the death of the Son of God for you and me. May we constantly grow in our appreciation of the fact that He loved "me!" It's very personal!! Christ is the Lover of my soul!

"Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to Thy bosom fly,  
While the nearer waters roll, while the tempest still is high.  
Hide me, O my Savior, hide, till the storm of life is past;  
Safe into the haven guide; O receive my soul at last."

✓ He's the Substitute for my soul - "and gave himself for me" (20h)

This is the proof of His love! He died for us. This of course refers to the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ on our behalf.

Romans 5:6-8

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

"I saw One hanging on a tree,  
In agony and blood,  
Who fixed His languid eyes on me,  
As near His cross I stood.

Sure, never to my latest breath,  
Can I forget that look;  
It seemed to charge me with His death,  
Though not a word He spoke.

"Oh, can it be, upon a tree  
The Saviour died for me?  
My soul is thrilled,  
My heart is filled,  
To think He died for me!"

Philippians 3:10 reveals yet another New Testament verse on Christ's sufficiency: "That I may know him (*relationally*), and the power of his resurrection (*dynamically*), and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death (*sacrificially*)."

We can live our daily lives knowing that we have Christ's life dwelling within us. He rose from the dead and we rose with Him, which means that we have been made spiritually alive but also spiritually empowered to live by His power and claim our victory over sin. Jesus Christ is alive and we are alive with Him, sharing His very own resurrection life, which means that we have His daily assistance to live victoriously.

"He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!  
He walks with me and He talks with me  
Along life's narrow way.  
He lives, He live, salvation to impart!  
You ask me how I know He lives:  
He lives within my heart."

There is no other way to experience and live the Christian life. There are not three steps we must follow. There are not three rules we must follow! It's all about Him, Jesus Christ, and the life which I share with Him. I rely upon Him for victory, I cling to Him for enjoyment in life, I live for Him, love Him, and trust in Him. I serve Him. Once again, it's all about Him! Togetherness with Christ! This is how we live the Christian life.

Philippians 3:10 is an important verse dealing with the Christ life and sufficiency. It teaches that we can know Christ in three ways.

➤ Relationally ("that I may know him")

This speaks of Christ's fellowship and His nearness and dearness to each believer. It reminds us that living the Christian life is about a relationship with a Person – the Person of Jesus Christ. We are to love Christ and know Him in a very personal and spiritually intimate way, depending upon Him as a bride depends upon her husband.



Romans 7:4 gives us this imagery:

“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law (*we dies to our old slave and condemning relationship when we were unsaved*) by the body of Christ (*His death on the cross*); that ye should be married to another, even to him (*Jesus Christ*) who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”

Living the Christian life is about marriage. We are married to Christ and should enjoy Him in a spiritual marriage or relationship, even as a husband and wife enjoy one another relationally, intimately, and share one another’s lives together. Christian living is not about rules and regulations – it’s about Christ! We have rules but they are not the focus! Christ is our focus and our love relationship with Him.

Psalm 18:1

“I will love thee, O LORD, my strength.”

Ira F. Stanphill was born in Belview, New Mexico, in 1914. He has written more than 550 songs, the most popular of which are “Mansion over the Hilltop,” “Room at the Cross,” and, of course, “Happiness Is the Lord.” On any number of occasions, the Lord has given a song to a songwriter when he or she least expected it. Such was the case of Ira Stanphill one afternoon in 1974 after he left the church office where he was pastor in Fort Worth, Texas. The car radio was on, and as he rode along, he listened to some commercial programs. Some were sponsored by establishments that advertised their happy hour and their alcoholic beverages. He also heard cigarettes being advertised in terms of how they bring happiness. As this thought really took over his mind he began to sing. He said, “I sang a new song, composing words and melody as I drove along. I sang it almost as it is published today (Happiness is the Lord).

“Happiness is a new creation,  
Jesus and me in close relation,  
Having a part in His salvation--  
Happiness is the Lord,

Real joy is mine,  
No matter if teardrops start;  
I've found the secret-  
It's Jesus in my heart!”

I am deeply concerned today with the trends that are leading Christians away from their completeness in Christ, away from their confidence that they can have in the sufficiency of Christ and His spiritual resources, which provide lasting fulfillment in their lives without the things of attractions and allurements of this world. So many Christians today are looking for completeness elsewhere, but they are not finding it in esoteric (secretive experiences), psychosomatic (self-induced experiences) and the many mystical experiences that are being promoted today in dreams and visions. As we have been discovering in the epistle of Colossians, we find completeness in Christ (Col. 2:10). In other words, as we revolve our life around Christ, we discover that His life and ministry to us is more than enough to meet our needs.

Philippians 1:21

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

This was Paul’s philosophy in life. Our Christian life is to revolve around a person – a love, appreciation, and longing to know Christ and live for Him. Yes, we are to know, love, and serve the Lord. We must remember that everybody lives for something or someone. The Christian should be absolutely sure that he revolved his life around Christ, possessing a love and passion for Him and to do His will.

Augustine once confessed:

“Oh God, Thou hast made us for Thyself and our souls are restless until they find their rest in Thee.”

Revolving your life around Christ in this life is gain. But it will also be more gain in the next life! Dr. William L. Pettingill used to say that “gain” is always more of the same thing. If to live is Christ, then to die would be more of Christ. It means to go and be with Him which is even far better (Phil. 1:23).

You will notice that in your Bible the verb “is” appears in italics. This means it is not in the original but had been added to make the meaning clearer. The verse is actually, “For to me to live Christ.”

Griffith Thomas said: “Christianity is Christ.” He was right. Christ had become for Paul the motive of his actions, the goal of his life and ministry, the source of his strength, and love of his life.

William MacDonald said this of Philippians 1:21:

“Here, in a nutshell, is Paul’s philosophy of life. He did not live for money, fame, or pleasure. The object of his life was to love, worship, and serve the Lord Jesus. He wanted his life to be like the life of Christ. He wanted the Savior to live out His life through him.”

Philippians 1:21

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

F. B. Meyer was on the right track when he wrote:

“Christ is the essence of our life, the model of our life, the aim of our life, the solace of our life, and the reward of our life.”

Someone else said:

“Jesus Christ was the sun around which Paul’s life orbited.”

Many people today, if they were honest, would have to say that for them to live is money, fame, a carnal type of happiness, family, or other kinds of idols that they have placed before Jesus Christ..

Samuel Gordon made this analysis:

- For me to live is money—to die is to leave it all behind.
- For me to live is fame—to die is to be quickly forgotten.
- For me to live is power—to die is to lose it all.
- For me to live is things—to die is to go empty-handed.

Robert Burns wrote in Tam O’Shanter:

“Pleasures are like poppies spread,  
You seize the flower, its blossom shed;  
Or like the snow falls in the river,  
A moment white—then melts for ever.”

Only Christ can satisfy. Really satisfy. Unquestionably satisfy! Jesus Christ should be the source and sustainer of our spiritual life. Everything in our life should revolve around our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Paul said, “That I may know him” (Phil. 3:10). Everything revolves around knowing Christ, drawing closer to Him (James 4:8) and learning to experience His sufficiency in your life. This means I don’t

have to wait to meet Christ at the communion table. I meet him in the morning and say, "Good morning Lord. I love you." It also means that I don't have to wait and meet him in the Church. I meet with Him in the evening and say, "Thank you Lord, for saving my soul and loving me and keeping me safe for another day." Christ lives within us (Col. 1:27) so we might have a personal and intimate relationship with Him. This is well-stated in the beloved hymn, "In the Garden."

"I come to the garden alone,  
While the dew is still on the roses,  
And the voice I hear falling on my ear  
The Son of God discloses.

He speaks, and the sound of His voice  
Is so sweet the birds hush their singing,  
And the melody that He gave to me  
Within my heart is ringing.  
I'd stay in the garden with Him

And He walks with me, and He talks with me,  
And He tells me I am His own;  
And the joy we share as we tarry there,  
None other has ever known."

➤ Dynamically – "and the power of his resurrection"

Power to live the Christian life is especially important. Without God's power we are overcome with life and we shrivel up and become useless.

Ephesians 6:10

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

God's every-present power and provision speaks of an important aspect of His sufficiency!

Philippians 4:11

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content."

Philippians 4:13 once again gives us this promise:

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

These verses are like twin truths reminding us about the sufficiency of Christ for our lives. In every situation that is occurring in our lives we can experience contentment (inner satisfaction and pleasure that comes from God’s life and care over our lives) and God’s courageous strength to go on in life, a divine strength that keeps us swimming upstream.

Jeremiah Burroughs said this about contentment:

“Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God’s wise and fatherly disposal in every condition.”

Contentment and courageous strength certainly speak of God’s sufficiency in our lives. When the Apostle Paul said that he could do all things, he meant all things which were God’s will for him to do. He had learned that the Lord’s commands are the Lord’s enablements. He knew that God would never call on him to accomplish some task without giving the necessary grace.

Remember this:

“The will of God will never lead you where the grace of God cannot keep you.”

Hawthorne said:

“The secret of Paul’s independence was his dependence upon Another. His self-sufficiency in reality came from being in vital union with One who is all-sufficient.”

One again, I really believe that the average Christian in our culture cynically views this kind of counsel as simplistic, unsophisticated, and naive. But the Bible gives us the promise that Christ’s dynamite power will enable you to pass through the deep waters triumphantly, joyfully, and peaceably. God’s ability become our ability as His life is manifested through us. We must accept this by faith and practice it in our daily lives when everything is falling apart around us.

“The King of love my shepherd is,  
Whose goodness faileth never;  
I nothing lack if I am His  
And He is mine forever.”

There was a brochure advertising a seminar to teach hypnosis to clergymen. Among other things, the brochure said, “Hypnosis within the clergy is a natural. With the aid of hypnosis an individual will learn to maximize their own God-given abilities, and live healthier and happier lives.” The brochure contained testimonies from ten people who had taken the class and felt it had enhanced their ministries. Of course, hypnosis is actually a form of shamanism made respectable by secular psychology. It is starting to make inroads into the Christian realm like other psychological practices. How does hypnosis supposedly work? Hypnotherapy allows the client’s own inner mind to resolve conflicts,” according to the brochure.

This is precisely what every form of psychotherapy promises. Christian bookstores are full of books advising believers to “look deep within”; “get in touch with your inner self”; “explore the recesses of your past fears, hurts, and disappointments”; and “find the real answers to your problems within your own heart.” Why? It’s because the claim is made that “the answers lie deep within.” This kind of advice sums up the very worst that psychology offers. This type of influence on many modern Christians is a serious threat to the church in our culture and the sufficiency and completeness we are to find in Christ.

We don’t find reliable answers and help by searching our past but discovering our riches in Christ – our relationship with Him, which include His power and provision for our daily lives, our loving and sustaining relationship with Him. We are complete in him!! Christ is enough! Get it? Got it? Go with it!

➤ Sacrificially - “and the fellowship of his sufferings”

In other words, we can also expect to experience some sacrifice and suffering for Christ along our Christian pathway. Standing up for Christ, His name, His cause, and the truth will result in some backlash. This goes with the territory of being related to Christ personally in your daily life and walk. We should be ready to suffer for Him.

Many times we want the power but not the problems related to suffering for Christ. I think the time is coming when we will witness more of this in the United States. Our stand upon the truth, such as traditional marriage and family life versus same sex marriages, homosexuality, abortion, and our witness with the Gospel message is going to be challenged like never before. Expect some backlash and suffering

along the way. Neither Paul nor Peter never promised that it would be an easy road the whole way.

1 Peter 4:14

“If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.”

Persecution will come. However, when Christ is our sufficiency, we can be sure that we will find the grace and strength we need to pass through suffering with His calming peace and “joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pet. 1:8). Where do you go when you have a problem and are facing a trial? What is your reaction to tests and troubles that invade your life? The Bible tells us what we need to do as we face the tough times and tribulations of life. We need to keep looking unto Jesus! It is the Lord Jesus Christ that gives us the inspiration, hope, help, and motivation to keep living valiantly and victoriously during great pressures.

Hebrews 12:2

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

We should be looking unto Jesus today! Why? It’s because Jesus is sufficient to meet our needs, inspires us, motivate us, and keeps us spiritually stable up to the end of our days on earth. Our relationship with Christ will keep our lives in check, victorious, balanced, and fulfilled.

There was something called the “Gold Dust Revival” a while back. Some Christians claim that their gold dust is a sign from God.

One Gold Dust testimony goes like this:

“She (Emma) glided into the room, emitting brilliant light and colors. Emma carried these bags and began pulling gold out of them. Then, as she walked up and down the aisles of the church, she began putting gold dust on people. “God, what is happening?” I asked. The Lord answered: “She is releasing the gold, which is both the revelation and the financial breakthrough that I am bringing into this church. I want you to prophecy that Emma showed up in this service-the same angel that

appeared in Kansas City-as a sign that I am endorsing and releasing a prophetic spirit in the church.”

How do you react to such outlandish statements like this? For the Christian, we are to say, “We are complete in Christ!”

Another lady wrote:

“Dear Steve, we are told that in one of the meetings a holy woman’ who is a Brazilian woman in residence there is experiencing gold dust. She claims that gold oozes from her pores and that she as a holy woman has seen visions of Benny Hinn with the gold dust appearing on him.”

While gold dust has appeared in charismatic meetings in the United States and abroad, tests on this alleged gold dust puzzle those who say the substance is falling from heaven. A Brazilian evangelist (Machado) at the center of the "gold dust" phenomenon being reported at charismatic churches across the United States and Europe says she is unfazed by scientific reports suggesting that all that glitters is not what it seems. This is because two independent tests on samples of the gold-colored dust that falls from Machado's head during services have found the substance to be more like plastic glitter, with no gold content. Machado concludes: "To me, it doesn't matter what it is as long as it's from God."

People who claim to be Christians continue to be swept away by these carnal distractions and pseudo experiences of playing around with Tinker Bell gold dust! As a result, they miss out on the absolute sufficiency that they can have in Christ.

Let me tell you what gold is!

Colossians 1:27

“Christ in you the hope of glory!”

Philippians 1:21

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

Colossians 2:10

“We are complete in him.”



John MacArthur once remarked:

“Human philosophy adds nothing to this. Human reason adds nothing to this. Human sociology, psychology, philosophy adds nothing to this. And we must realize that whereas man may teach us some things helpful about life in this world, they offer nothing to make up some lack of Christ.”

We are complete in Christ. Jesus can meet all of our physical, spiritual, and emotional needs in life. We need to believe and practice this new way of life in Christ or else we will eventually find ourselves clawing after the world’s resources and fraudulent experiences which can never satisfy us, change us for God’s glory, or make us spiritual. Jesus is still the answer!

“Some men try so hard to prove  
That God's not really real  
While others say they know for sure  
His love you cannot feel.  
But I know He is real within my soul  
For one day He cleansed and He made me whole  
And Jesus is still the answer  
For that longing deep in your soul.

Some men pretend that things of this world  
Have brought them peace of mind  
But with the dawn of each new day  
New thrills they try to find.  
Not until they meet the Prince of Peace  
Can they ever hope to find relief  
For Jesus is still the answer  
For a world that seeking for peace.

Jesus is still the answer  
And though time and ages roll.  
Jesus is still the answer  
He's the answer for your soul.  
And though some may say  
That He doesn't fit with their philosophy  
I know Jesus is still the answer  
He's always been and always will be.”

Many today have downplayed the internal sanctifying work of Christ's life within us which is the essence of His ministry. Psychological and psychotherapy sanctification has become a substitute for Christ's sufficiency. No therapist can accomplish what Christ can do in transforming our soul into the likeness of Christ (2 Pet. 3:18). In fact, no therapy devised by men can possibly bring someone to repentance or repair their lives which have been broken by sin. Those who believe therapy is the best means to cure the sick or wounded soul of a person are trying to substitute fleshly devices for the sufficiency of God.

Here is something to contemplate. What point is there in seeking the Holy Spirit's comfort (John 14:26; 15:26) if all of our deep-seated emotional problems can be addressed only by trained psychologist (behavior scientists), or if people can come to grips with their lives only by getting in touch with their childhood, or if the answers to our deepest hurts are buried deep within us? If these things are true, we need a therapist and not the sufficiency of God. Sadly, this is the direction that many have chosen in the church. We must not only beware of adding legalism to salvation but also adding legalistic humanism to sanctification. The legalistic ideas of humanism continue to raise its ugly head when Christians depend upon psychotherapy (or psychobabble) to treat the effects of their disobedience, depression, and lack of spiritual living. We must beware of the false teachings of the pseudo sciences.

Let me once again share Paul's emotional touch and charge to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:20: "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings (idle babble), and oppositions of science falsely so called" (contradictions to true knowledge but what is falsely called or labeled as knowledge).

Rick Renner said this of false teaching:

"What these leaders (false teachers) were promoting was a twisted version of truth. It was error packaged with elements of truth and then stealthily posed to believers in the guise of authenticity to make it more appealing."

Beloved, don't fall for the esoteric, mystical, and sensational experiences of today. Don't follow novel teachings which take you away from Christ's sufficiency. Don't ever fall into the trap of replacing Christ's sufficiency with human wisdom. Finally, don't be attracted to the religious world of entertainment thinking that somehow

it will fill a void that only God can fill with His sufficiency (His life, presence, strength, and abiding ministry in your life).

Psalms 46:1-2 reminds us of this unchanging promise:

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.”

In this Psalm, earthquakes and great upheavals of nature are likened to difficult trials and hard times that we pass through. They can be scary and fearful bringing discouragement and despair and anger and frustration into our lives, but God wants us to pass through these troubling events without being overcome with fear.

This means that we do not need to fear though calamities and catastrophes continue to occur all around us. It means we do not need to be overcome with fear and anxiety even though we are at war with the ideology of communism in our country. With all these tumultuous events occurring around us we can avail ourselves to God’s sufficiency and stillness and not be fearful. The Psalmist comes to the final conclusion: “Be still and know that I am God” (Ps. 46:10).

This simply means to relax in God’s peace and sovereignty as we face the calamities and hardships of life. Beloved, this stillness also speaks of God’s sufficiency. In this short Psalm, God’s strength and stillness is His complete sufficiency for our daily lives when our world seems to be experiencing earthquakes and movements that we are not comfortable with. How do we keep our soul from becoming noisy? How do we keep our soul quiet and undisturbed? It’s by experiencing God’s incredible power and peace in our hearts.

John 14:27

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

2 Peter 1:2

“Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God (His nature, character, ways), and of Jesus our Lord.”

The multiplication of God’s strengthening grace and peace is the sure way to pass through our spiritual earthquakes and upheavals. Has your soul been still or has it

become noisy with fears and anxieties generated by uncertainty, changes in your life, and difficult trials? Remember that anxiety stems from fear – fear being the emotion of uncertainty and the emotion of vulnerability.

Psalms 46 says that we do not need to be overcome with debilitating fearfulness when we find God's strength and stillness. God is our spiritual strength and He is always with us! He is in charge of our lives and everything that is occurring around us. So, we can relax (be still) and find God's solace and peace. God is our sufficiency for daily living. Just trust in Him! We need these stabilizing truths and promises for when our souls become noisy with fear and worry.

Jim Berg once said:

“A disciplined mind approaches pressures with purpose and structure.”

In other words, we must discipline our thinking (the way we think) and come to God's conclusions about our trials (“whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty” - James 1:25). We must learn to handle our pressures Biblically and look at them from a Biblical perspective. After all, godliness is intentional, not accidental. This is why we are called to discipline our lives for the purpose of godliness (1 Tim. 4:7-8).

God in some way is sovereign over every event associated with our lives (Ps. 103:19) and will supply our needs as we pass through the trials of our lives. Instead of pushing the panic button and not handling unexpected demands well, we must be ready to absorb the unexpected by finding God's inward supply of strength, stability and stillness in our lives.

God is enough! Do we really believe this? Are we aware of this? Can we really rely on Christ for everything? Why do we become so scared and worried about life's demands and during life's changes? Cannot we trust in Christ to meet our daily needs and all the pressing needs that we face in life? Is our relationship with Jesus Christ enough? Do we have a trusting, growing, and loving relationship with Him?

- ✓ Is God enough when we are stricken with illness and are not sure about the future?
- ✓ Is God enough when we are standing alone for what is right and nobody else around us seems to care?
- ✓ Is God enough when the bottom drops out of our life?
- ✓ Is God enough when someone dear to us dies and leaves us all alone?

Beloved, Christ is enough to meet our every need in life.

1 Peter 5:7 says: “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” That Jesus cares for you, means that He is there for you!

“Does Jesus care when my heart is pained  
Too deeply for mirth or song,  
As the burdens press, and the cares distress,  
And the way grows weary and long?

Does Jesus care when I’ve said “goodbye”  
To the dearest on earth to me,  
And my sad heart aches till it nearly breaks—  
Is it aught to Him? Does He see?

Oh, yes, He cares, I know He cares,  
His heart is touched with my grief;  
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,  
I know my Savior cares.”

Beloved, Jesus is enough! Have you been experiencing the sufficiency of God in your life?

One preacher shared this story:

“A pastor I know of was conducting a series of meetings in several churches in North and South Carolina. He was staying in the home of some close friends in Asheville and traveling each night to wherever he was speaking that evening. One night he was scheduled to speak at a church in Greenville, South Carolina, which is several hours from Asheville. Because he didn’t have a car, some friends from Greenville offered to transport him to and from the meeting. When they arrived to pick him up, he bid farewell to his hosts and told them he hoped to be back by midnight or soon afterward.

“After ministering at the Greenville church, he stayed awhile to enjoy some fellowship and then rode back to Asheville. Approaching the house, he saw the porch light on and assumed his hosts would be prepared for his arrival because he had discussed the time of his return with them. As he got out of the car, he sent his

driver on his way, saying, “You must hurry. You have a long drive back. I’m sure they’re prepared for me; I’ll have no problem.”

“He felt the bitter cold of the winter night as he walked the long distance to the house. By the time he reached the porch, his nose and ears were already numb. He tapped gently on the door but no one answered. He tapped a little harder, and then even harder—but still no reply. Finally, concerned about the intense cold, he beat on the kitchen door and on a side window. But there was still no response.

“Frustrated and becoming colder by the moment, he decided to walk to a neighboring house so he could call and awaken his hosts. On the way he realized that knocking on someone’s door after midnight wasn’t a safe thing to do, so he decided to find a public telephone. It was as dark as it was cold, and the pastor wasn’t familiar with the area.

“Consequently, he walked for several miles. At one point he slipped in the wet grass growing beside the road and slid down a bank into two feet of water. Soaked and nearly frozen, he crawled back up to the road and walked farther until he finally saw a blinking motel light. He awakened the manager, who was gracious enough to let him use the telephone.

“The frozen pastor made the call and said to his sleepy host, ‘I hate to disturb you, but I couldn’t get anyone in the house to wake up. I’m several miles down the road at the motel. Could you come get me?’ To which his host replied, ‘My dear friend, you have a key in your overcoat pocket. Don’t you remember? I gave it to you before you left.’ The pastor reached into his pocket. Sure enough, there was the key. He had the key the entire time without realizing it.

This true story illustrates how many Christians are trying to live life without using the key to the Christian life which is the sufficiency of God. God is the key to every true, spiritual blessing. We must plug Him into our lives on a daily basis so we can experience His sufficiency in our lives.

Ephesians 1:3

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”

God alone fulfills the deepest longings of our hearts and supplies us with every spiritual resource that we need. Believers have in Christ everything they will ever need to meet any trial, any craving, any difficulty they might ever encounter in this life. Even the newest convert possesses sufficient resources for every spiritual need for every one of us as a Christian is a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

We must be careful that we do not begin to possess a heart of unbelief as God's people and depart from God's will and sufficiency for our lives during times of difficulties and stress.

Hebrews 3:12

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

Unbelief in God's sufficiency, failing to possess a proper awareness of the knowledge of God (2 Pet. 1:2; Col. 1:10), keeps us from the necessary spiritual provisions that God wants to give to us. In other words, we need to keep up our guard and faith in God's goodness and unfailing love for us lest we become misguided and misdirected in life, no longer possessing faith in God's plan, power, and provision for our lives.

Instead of floundering in unbelief and not dealing with our trials from a Biblical perspective, instead of taking our eyes off of God's goodness and supply during our tribulations in life, we must remember that God always loves us and that we are a victor and conqueror through Christ.

Romans 8:31-32 rings a clear note:

"What shall we then say to these things? (God's eternal plan of salvation to save and conform us to the image of His Son – vv. 28-30) If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?"

In light of the fact that God foreknew us, predestined us, called us, justified us, and glorified us in His eternal plan of the ages, we know that He is for us. And, if God is for us, then who can be against us? To be against us would be to go against God Himself! This reminds us that God will take care of His own children! Nobody can stop God from His keeping care and provision over His children since He has proven that He is for His children in planning out and securing their salvation.

Romans 8:32 goes on to say:

“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him (Christ) also freely give us all things?” (all the spiritual blessings we need so we can live the Christian life consistently, peacefully, contently, and victoriously).

Paul’s point is that God gave His only Son to die in our place. If He did this, then certainly He will make sure that we receive everything that we need to live a godly and victorious life.

Paul’s happy logic goes something like this: “God did the greatest thing imaginable when He gave His own Son for us on the cross. So, don’t you think that He will graciously give you lesser things and anything that you need in this life?” The answer is understood. Yes, He will give us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3).

The Puritan, John Flavel, put it this way:

“Surely if he would not spare this own Son one stroke, one tear, one groan, one sigh, one circumstance of misery, it can never be imagined that ever he should, after this, deny or withhold from his people, for whose sakes all this was suffered, any mercies, any comforts, any privilege, spiritual or temporal, which is good for them.”

God will supply us with everything we need to live above our trials and hardships and God demonstrated this already by giving us the greatest sacrifice He could for His children – the sacrifice of His own son. If He gave us His Son, then surely He will give us what we need to pass through our trials which are of much lesser significance than the giving of His Son.

Mackintosh said:

“The language of unbelief is, ‘How shall He?’ The language of faith is ‘How shall He not?’”

Here is the point. If God loved us enough to give us His own Son, He will certainly love us enough to keep us spiritually stable as we pass through hard and difficult times. If God did the unimaginably greatest thing possible for us by not sparing His



own Son, then won't He do that which is far less demanding? Yes! He will sustain us through the hard days!

This is the gist of what is said next in Romans 8:35-37:

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? (He died for us!) *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter (the dangers of satanic persecution – Eph. 6:12). Nay, in all these things (hardships, trials, difficult times) we are more than conquerors (super conquerors) through him that loved us.”

How can we conquerors even when evil seems to be getting the upper hand? We are conquerors through God's sustaining power and grace. The love that Christ has for us, which was displayed on Calvary's cross, reminds us that we are victors through the victory we have obtained for us through Christ's loving death on our behalf (Col. 2:15).

Romans 8:38-39 concludes with this resounding note of victory:

“For I am persuaded (*absolute confidence*), that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (*the love God has for us in the provisions of Jesus Christ and our relationship with Him*).

The thrust of Romans 8:31–39 is to motivate committed believers to endure suffering, knowing that victory is already accomplished through Christ. This means that each believer needs to enter each new day realizing that God is for them and has provided victory. There is no need to fear, for his loving Father desires only the best for His children, even if they must go through trials. The fact that God is for us and loves us means that He will supply us with His peace, power, and every spiritual provision we need to pass through life. The giving of His Son proves He will get us through life and it's also the way we receive the victory! Beloved, this is the promise of God's sufficiency!

God's unconditional love for His children, saving them completely and supplying their spiritual needs becomes an important aspect of God's sufficiency. But not only

His love, but His constant faithfulness to His children is another aspect of God's sufficiency.

Lamentations 3:21-23

"This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. *It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.*"

The words mercies and compassions draw out attention to God's emotional response to the needs of His people (Gen. 43:30; 1 Kings 3:26). Our God is very interested in our daily lives, how we feel, what we are passing through, and He wants to sympathize with us.

God's endless supply of mercies and compassions directed toward His children, both outwardly and inwardly, are based upon His immutability or His unchangeableness. The stock market changes, weather changes, churches, relationships, our health and so many other things change, but God never changes. This is why we can always have a fresh supply of God's mercies extended to our lives every day.

Think of the many mercies He sends our way. Outwardly God brings events into our lives that demonstrate His mercy toward us. Inwardly, God also supplies us with His comfort, hope, renewal, and the reassurance of His loving embrace and presence to get us through whatever we are facing in life. We need His mercies every day and we can only experience them when we have a close relationship with God. Every day we have God's strength, grace, and spiritual provision which in itself is an act of His extended mercy to our lives. Our God is very loyal and faithful to His people. If we don't know it, we should know it!

"Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,  
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;  
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not  
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.  
"Great is Thy faithfulness!" "Great is Thy faithfulness!"  
Morning by morning new mercies I see;  
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—  
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!"

God's mercies speak of His ever-faithful expressions of loving compassions (sympathies) that He sends upon our lives every day, so we are not "consumed" or overcome with worry, anxiety, despair, discouragement, and depression. Much like the manna in the wilderness, the supply of God's mercies can never be exhausted. And the fact that we have a new supply everyday means that yesterday's mercies will not cover for today! God's daily supplies of mercies or compassions that He sends to our hearts and lives speak of God's complete sufficiency to enable us to keep on keeping on when things become difficult and challenging in life.

Beloved, we need to take time and receive of God's mercies and let Him minister to our souls. We need to feel His loving touch upon your soul, His soothing peace, His inward strength. We need to allow God to send His waves of mercies upon our life and soul every day so we can feel again, laugh again, and enjoy life again. God's daily mercies (sympathies that He extends to our lives) gives us emotional stability as we pass through different phases of our lives and the uncharted and unsure waters.

God is saying, "I intend for you to wake up every morning aware of My faithfulness toward you and experience my morning mercies." We are not only to have a cup of coffee in the morning but a cup of God's mercies. We need the Lord's healing balm today and His touch upon our lives. God's endless supply of mercies mean that we can respond to life's ups and downs with confidence knowing that God is always faithful in supplying us with His mercies.

"Can we find a friend so faithful  
Who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our every weakness,  
Take it to the Lord in prayer."

The enjoyment of the believer's communion with God and experiencing His mercies can be likened to the springtime. We can live with a perpetual spiritual springtime that occurs in the hearts, experiencing God's renewal, freshness, and life. In conveying this, Kaiser wrote these lovely words – "Bring Back the Springtime."

"When in the spring the flowers  
Are blooming bright and fair  
After the gray of winter's gone.

Once again the lark begins its tuning  
Back in the meadows of my home.

Lord to my heart bring back the springtime  
Take away the cold and dark of sin.  
O refill me now sweet Holy Spirit  
May I warm and tender be again.”

God is faithful to His children in supplying them with the daily mercies they need so they can pass through life’s demands and difficulties with His special touch upon their hearts and lives. Because of the fresh supply of God’s mercies, we can always experience “days of praise” as we live in the care of God’s provision.

1 Corinthians 10:13

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man (common trials): but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able (controlled pressures); but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*” (conquering grace).

This verse also speaks of God’s faithfulness being extended to our lives by providing us with a way of escape during the times of our temptations and even general trials which can also turn into temptations to distrust God, move away from His will, and experience defeat in our Christian life.

What is the “way of escape” that Paul is referring to in this verse? Some suggest that it is running away from the temptation since Paul states to “flee idolatry” (1 Co. 10:14). Dr. Hutton used to say it like this: “God always makes a way of escape and sometimes the way of escape is the king’s highway and a good pair of heels.” In other words, let the Devil see your heels and run as hard as you can to get away from the temptation. One of the reasons we yield to temptation is that we are like the little boy in the pantry who was too close to sin. His mother heard a noise because he had taken down the cookie jar. She said, “Willie, where are you?” He answered that he was in the pantry. “What are you doing there?” He said, “I’m fighting temptation.”

Of course, we know that the instruction in Scripture does tell us that we need to flee sin and there are times we must practice this escape route (1 Cor. 10:14; 6:18). But in this text Paul does not seem to be addressing the believer’s responsibility in

escaping temptation but God doing something in the believer's heart to enable him to "bear" the temptation that he is passing through. If we are going to "flee idolatry" and have victory, we must first experience something on the inside of our hearts. In other words, we won't run away from sin unless God does something special in our hearts. God must move in our hearts by granting us with the sustaining grace and power to say "no" to the temptation. And this seems to be "the way of escape" being spoken about here. It's God's constant empowering grace to overcome temptation and any general trial in life that might lead to temptation.

Of course, the way of escape is not always to be rid of the trials but to pass through each trial by His sustaining and empowering grace. But God in His faithfulness always promises His way of escape which is the way of His grace and power. The use of the definite article "the" with both "temptation" (the temptation) and "way of escape" (the escape) points to a particular way of escape that is available in each temptation or trial that we face.

Of course, some Christians that were facing temptation were not looking for a way out but a way in for indulgence. We have two options. We can give in to the temptation, or we can give in to God's escape. We cannot help being tempted, but we can stop yielding to temptation. But here is the promise. If we want God's escape, we will have it! This again speaks of God's sufficiency. If we want a way out it will always be there! The way of escape is God's sufficiency.

1 Thessalonians 5:24

"Faithful *is* he that calleth you, who also will do *it*."

Yes, we can experience God's sufficiency in our lives, moment by moment, day by day, year after year.

2 Corinthians 4:16 gives us this wonderful closing promise of sufficiency:

"For which cause we faint not (*lose our spiritual stamina and find ourselves overcome with the pressures of life*); but though our outward man perish (*the human body*), yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day" (*the daily inner renewal of our soul and spirit*).

Beloved, we keep from fainting in life, being overcome with weary, worry, and spiritual fatigue by being inwardly replenished by God. God is our spiritual psychologist for He is the only One who can touch our souls. God works on the inside of our soul, the place where we need strength, comfort, healing, peace, and restoration. It's the place where God grants us stability and staying power to go on in life. Yes, God is always there for us to share our burdens, shine in our hearts, and to send His calming provision as we face life's trials.

“Never a trial that He is not there,  
Never a burden that He doth not bear,  
Never a sorrow that He doth not share,  
Moment by moment, I'm under His care.

Moment by moment I'm kept in His love;  
Moment by moment I've life from above;  
Looking to Jesus till glory doth shine;  
Moment by moment, O Lord, I am Thine.”