

The Sufficiency of Christ # 7

Colossians 2: 8-15

As we continue our study in Colossians, we must keep in mind the difficulties they faced. As we have learned, the dangerous doctrines of the Gnostics were gaining momentum. These believed a higher level of knowledge was reserved for a select group of people, initiated into the secret knowledge only few possessed. This doctrine had found its way into the church, with the false assumption that salvation was reserved for the intellectually superior. Paul was well aware of the tide of false doctrine being promoted by society, and he was committed to challenging this wave of heresy with biblical truth.

Our world is not that much different than the world in which Paul lived and ministered. People are religious beings searching for meaning and sense of purpose. They will worship something, even if it is their own knowledge and abilities. Modern doctrines may have a hint of truth, but at their core they are corrupt and false. We ought to rejoice that we were presented genuine Truth in Christ. He alone is the source of salvation. Apart from Him, man remains lost and condemned before God.

This passage has much to say in our day, and is as needful now as it was when it was written to the Colossians. Paul presents Christ as the only source of truth and hope. Regardless of what men have been taught, Jesus alone can provide what all stand in need of. The redeemed in Christ have no need to look to another. I want to examine the [provisions](#) afforded the believer in salvation as we consider: [The Sufficiency of Christ](#).

I. Our Certainty in Christ (8-9) – The fundamentals of Christian faith was being challenged on many fronts, and Paul sought to comfort the believer concerning their faith. Although many refuted the teaching of the Gospel, Paul knew all believers could possess absolute certainty in Christ.

A. A Word of Caution (8) – [Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ](#). As Paul continues to exalt Christ, and begins to address His sufficiency, he offers a word of caution to Colossae. The doctrines of men were varied, but they were all dangerous and damaging. He warns them not to be spoiled by such doctrine. This has the idea of “*leading off as prey, to carry away captive, to rob or kidnap.*” He reveals *the doctrines of men would rob believers of the abundant riches available in Christ*. He addresses four specific doctrines we are to guard against.

- **Philosophy** – Human reasoning, intellectualism. A system of thought or discipline.
- **Vain Deceit** – Lies, deceit, and intellectual fraud taught through subtlety.

- **Tradition of Men** – This deals with the way men think when they ignore God and His purpose for life. The Pharisees and legalists were a continual presence surrounding Paul. Everywhere he went, he found tradition being held in higher regard than divine truth.
- **Rudiments of the World** – It is generally agreed this speaks of the base elements of the world: earth, water, wind, and fire. Some assume Paul spoke of an elementary view of theology that never embraced the profound truths of the Gospel and the divine plan of God for humanity. Others conclude this speaks of worshiping the creation more than the Creator. Both were prevalent then and now, and both are in error. The Old Testament revealed Christ through types and pictures. Now we have the risen Christ. Many today continue to worship the stars and planets, placing more emphasis on them than the Lord who created them.

B. A Word of Confirmation (9) – *For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.* Paul had warned of the doctrines of men that are not in Christ, and here he proclaims the abundance through Christ. The world looked to the philosophies and traditions of men, worshiping philosophy and planets, but they had received truth. They had been born again in Christ, made part of His body, in who dwells the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form. There was no need to bother with the deceit of men, they had the assurance of a risen Lord who possesses and portrays the very essence of God.

- Christ was not a created being who obtained greatness among men; He came as God robed in flesh, fully God and fully man, offering His body a sacrifice for sin, redeeming us from condemnation and placing us in the family of God. He is not merely a legend passed down through tradition and folk lore. We need not look to or consider another. We have received absolute truth in Christ, the embodiment of God.

II. Our Completeness in Christ (10-12) – Although the philosophies of men were ever changing, the believer had received hope, confidence, and assurance that never would. There is no worry of the next “best” thing coming along. We need not fear our Lord being unable to equip or keep us. We are complete in Him. Consider our completeness in Christ. We see:

A. The Saturation (10a) – *And ye are complete in him.* What a comforting and profound statement. The word complete literally means “full.” We have been filled with the essence of Christ. We are saturated in His power. The need we had being separated from God has been completely satisfied in Christ. We lack nothing in the Lord. We will never face anything in life or death that is beyond His ability to control or handle. We are secure in Him! *The Gnostics insisted other things, particularly knowledge, had to be added to Christ for salvation to occur. Apostates today, like the*

*Gnostics, are always adding things such as baptism, church membership, taking communion etc. to faith in Christ as essential to salvation. But Christ is all one needs for salvation.*ⁱ

B. The Appropriation (10b) – *And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:* Let's consider this in its context. Paul confirms we are complete in Christ who is the head of all principality and power. The Gnostics were limited by their wisdom. The Traditionalists were limited by their ability to keep and honor tradition through religious activities and works. We are not bound by such restrictions and limitations. We are complete, filled with Christ, who possesses all principality and power. The word principality simply means “*the cause.*” He is the Beginning because He is the cause of creation. He is the Head because He is before all things and by Him were all things created and consist. He is the Creator and Sustainer.

- We are filled with Him. We do not possess the power our Lord possesses, but we have been appropriated a relationship with Him with the promise of His mighty presence and power in our lives! Our existence and eternal destiny is not limited to the wisdom, ability, or resources of humanity. We are in Christ!

C. The Circumcision (11) – *In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:* Paul speaks of an event the Traditionalists would've related to. In the Old Testament male children were circumcised to identify them with the people of God. By the removal of skin, they were associated with God and His commandments. Here Paul speaks of the spiritual circumcision of all believers. This was done without hands. He doesn't speak of a physical practice, but the removal of the body of sin by the hand of Christ through a personal relationship with Him. Just as it was in the Old Testament, those who have been spiritually circumcised, having the body of sin removed and cast aside, are now identified with Christ, being made partakers of His glorious inheritance!

- Circumcision did not have to be repeated. It was a once and for all event. So it is with our salvation. Once we are identified with Christ, we are identified with Him eternally!

D. The Resurrection (12) – *Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.* Here we are reminded of the spiritual resurrection that occurs at salvation. In sin we are dead, separated from God and void of spiritual life. In Christ we are resurrected a new creature, delivered from the condemnation of sin and made alive in the Lord.

- Some view this passage to support baptismal regeneration, but that thinking is in error. Baptism stands as an outward testimony of an inward change. It reveals those dead in sin have been resurrected in Christ. It bears testimony of the death and resurrection of Christ. Through our completeness in Christ, we experience a spiritual resurrection at the new birth with the promise of a literal resurrection when our Lord comes for His church.

III. The Conquest through Christ (13-15) – In our remaining verses Paul addresses the victory all believers experience in Christ. Through Him we are given victory over sin, delivered from the eternal consequences it brings. We experience:

A. Deliverance from the Penalty of Sin (13) – *And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;* We know that sin is enmity with God. While in sin there can be no fellowship with God and we abide under His wrath. Prior to salvation we are dead in trespasses and sin awaiting the ultimate penalty for that sin which is eternal death. Sin when it is finished brings forth death. Death is the penalty for sin. Christ came that we might be reconciled to God and delivered from the penalty of sin. He has forgiven our trespasses, cleansed our sin, and quickened (to make alive) us in Him.

- I rejoice to know that I have been delivered from the penalty of sin, eternal death. It has been said, he who is born twice dies once, while those who have only been born once will die twice. In reality physical death for the believer brings the beginning of real life within the presence of our Lord. *John 5:24 – Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

B. Deliverance from the Payment for Sin (14) – *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;* Here Paul speaks of the Law of God that reveals His holiness and our guilt. There was no question we were guilty before God due to our sin. We owed a debt we could not pay. Sin had to be atoned and we had no way of securing atonement within ourselves. There was nothing we could offer, sacrifice, or do to appease the holiness of God. We were declared guilty by the Law of God.

- As Christ bore our sin upon the cross the holiness of God was satisfied and atonement was made. As we come to Christ by faith, the guilt of our past is erased. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to our account. We are no longer viewed as guilty according to the Law of God, but as righteous through the Son of God. Our blessed Lord nailed our sin and condemnation to the cross of Calvary as He bled and died for the sins of the world.

- Sin bears consequences and the debt of sin must be paid. Christ has made provision for all who come to Him in salvation. Sadly, many remain in their sin and have not accepted the atoning grace of Christ. They remain guilty before God and will stand accountable for sin. What a tragedy this is. Christ has made a way of reconciliation and yet many will not receive His atoning grace by faith.

C. Deliverance from the Power of Sin (15) – *And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.* Through inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul reveals insight to the victory that was won as Christ bore our sin on the cross and rose again. He spoiled principalities and powers, literally “*Stripping them of power and authority.*”

- Clearly Paul is speaking of the power of Satan and his evil influences. While in sin, we are dominated by the prince of this world. Our lives are controlled by sin. We are slaves to an evil taskmaster. In salvation we are set free from the power and bondage of sin. That is not to say that we live perfect lives above sin, but that we are no longer bound by sin and Satan. His grip on humanity was broken and defeated publicly as Christ fulfilled the plan of redemption on the cross and rose again in power and great glory. We do not have to live lives defeated by sin. We have a source of power to overcome the temptations of sin, lusts of the flesh, and fear of death! [Heb.2:14-15](#) – *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;*^[15] *And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

Conclusion: I rejoice to know that my salvation is secure in Christ. I am complete in Him. I am not trusting in vain deceits, philosophies of men, or human ability. I have placed my faith and trust in the eternal, victorious, risen Christ. I have been delivered from the penalty and power of sin. I have been set free from the guilt and condemnation it brings. I can enjoy victory through Christ.

If you have been saved, you ought to rejoice in Christ as well. If not, you remain in your sin and are guilty before God. You stand accountable for your sin. Why not look to Christ by faith in salvation so that you too can be forgiven, resurrected in Christ, and experience complete victory and abundant life?

ⁱ Analytical Bible Expositor - Analytical Bible Expositor – Galatians-Colossians.