

The Sufficiency of Christ

Colossians 2: 5-19; Colossians 3: 1-4.

N. Anderson.

I think you will agree that there is a long story between Colossians 2: 6, and Colossians 3: 4. In the first of these we have the **Beginning**; in the other, the **Consummation** of the Christian pathway. In the Colossian epistle we have one of the fullest presentations of the glory of the Son of God. In Colossians 1, the Spirit of God brings out His glory step by step, and He is the living object Who shall fill and absorb us for eternity. We shall never tire of the glory, all-sufficiency and charm of our Saviour. In the present day the devil's invasion of the Christian profession is most marked. How sad that traditions of men, philosophy, science (falsely so-called), vain deceit, etc., have been allowed by those who profess faith to permeate the Christian company in spite of the greatness and sufficiency of Christ. It is all around us to-day, hence we need this epistle now more than ever before.

Referring to the first Colossians 5: 12, the apostle turns to **thanksgiving**. It is blessed to begin there realising that however much we may increase in spiritual apprehension, we are no more fitted thereby for "sharing the portion of the saints in light" than when we first believed in Christ. Though the tide of evil is engulfing Christendom **we are made fit** and that by the Father. His work is perfect and cannot be improved upon.

The apostle then sketches out for us in blessed detail the glories of Christ. There were at that time those who, while not openly excluding Him, were in no wise honouring Him. Indeed, according to chapter 2, they were belittling and displacing Him to the irreparable loss and damage of men's souls. In contrast to these the apostle glorifies Him. He declares the Son to be the firstborn of all creation. He had entered through incarnation into the creation which He Himself had created. He is the Firstborn (in rank not in chronology) on account of **Who** He is — God in the glory of His Person. He is the beginning thus of the first creation and, as the first born from among the dead, He is the beginning of the new creation. All our links with Him are in resurrection.

In Colossians 2 the apostle embarks on solemn warnings as to the incoming evil and presents that which preserves from it by setting forth the truth of our identification with Christ in death, resurrection and life. In v. 6 they are said to have **received** Christ Jesus the Lord. He speaks of the manner of their receiving Him — "as." How then had they received Him? Broken down by the gospel of the grace of God which had saved them; conscious of their utter helplessness, absolute unworthiness and deserving of divine judgment, they had been drawn to Christ with the certain knowledge that He alone could do them good and bring them to God. The whole tenor of their Christian life has to be of the same character for now they are to "so walk in Him." **Christ is all-sufficient for all the journey**. Can we each say truly, "He is as indispensable to me today as in that day when I first trusted Him as my Saviour and Lord." If any of us cannot so speak, may our gracious Lord use this word to recover us.

Then they were to be rooted and built up in Him. No doubt "rooted" suggests the thought of a tree with its growth and fruitbearing, that which is for His eye and pleasure. "Built up" suggests the house, that which is seen in testimony here in this world. We have our part in both aspects of Christian life thus figured. May we strike our roots deep into this fertile soil and be built up "in" Him, the sure foundation. They were to be "**stablished** in the faith." To be so we need to know what the "faith" is. No book of man's wisdom can school our souls in this. The sure Word of God is our only text book, hence the constant need to steep our souls in the precious Word of God. Do we read and meditate upon the Scriptures as much as we could do, not just as much as we ought to? It is certain that if we read,

seeking Christ on every page, the light of God will flood our souls. "The faith" is the whole body of the revealed truth of God; the complete teaching of Christianity in which we have the revelation of God in the Son and the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which find their centre in Christ Who died and Who is now triumphantly risen and glorified — an inexhaustible store. This is the blessed substance of the faith. They were to follow the apostle's teaching — "as ye have been taught." It has often been said, "What is true is not new and what is new is not true." They had received that which was from the beginning through the apostles and were not to depart from it. The hallmark of apostolic authority is, "We are of God." The mark of faith is, "he that knoweth God heareth us" (1 John 4: 6). Innovations, however learned and attractive, are to be tested by the Scriptures — the alone Word of Truth. If they do not stand four-square with apostolic teaching — whoever propounds them — they are of no value. Indeed they are positively evil; let us throw them away. The mark of a healthy Christian is the tenacious hold he has on the original teaching. At the beginning of the dispensation "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking bread and in prayers" (Acts 2: 42). Only thus shall we abound in thanksgiving. Does our study cause us to do this? Philosophy, legality etc., turn a man in upon himself; an unhappy occupation. "The faith" gives us an object outside of ourselves, the living glorious Lord Jesus Christ Who so eclipses everyone and everything that we abound in thanksgiving to God through Him. In the midst of a rapidly apostatising Christendom we have, through grace, received true and sound ministry but let us remember that the greater our privilege the greater is our responsibility. The way to grow in the truth of God is by obedience and the way to obedience is affection.

He then gives warning as to what things are to be avoided in v. 8, setting them in sharp contrast with Christ Himself in Whom dwelleth "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." We cannot get help from anything outside of Himself. Ministry which does not bring Him livingly before us will not do. True ministry exalts Christ and edifies the saints. Ministry which does not do this can well be left alone. In Colossians 1: 19 we are assured that "all fulness" dwelt in Him for the specific purpose of effecting reconciliation. He took flesh and blood in order to lay down His life to bring us to God but He never gave up His Manhood and the fulness of Godhead dwells in Him bodily today as the glorified Man. Everything of God is concentrated in that Man and we are filled full in Him. He Who is great enough to fill "all things" delights to fill our hearts. May the Lord give us each to grow in the knowledge of God, appreciating that anything not according to Christ is not according to God.

In v. 11 we have the thought of circumcision or cutting off. Put simply we may say that in relation to all that we were as in Adam, we have been cut off in the cutting off of Christ. He went to Calvary to bring to an end under the judgment of God that sinful state that was in us. Do we endorse this? Do we praise Him for it? It is a necessary step in our soul's history. God has come to an end of man in the flesh — have I? Do I appreciate that the flesh in me is as unable now to do anything towards or for God as in my unconverted days? The Spirit of God states here **doctrinally** that as men in the flesh we have come to an end before God in the cross of Christ. As buried with him in baptism, our profession is that we have been put out of sight according to the flesh in the death of Christ. It is incumbent therefore that each one of us should be true to our baptism. Then, too, we are "risen with Him." God would engage the soul with positive blessing — our association with Christ risen. Moreover, we are "quickenened" with Him. Not only is our standing on resurrection ground but in this new position we have the life which belongs to it — the life of Christ. Thus we have touched on what is ours "in" and "with" Him. We are now identified with Him in death, resurrection and life. What manner of people ought we to be?

Colossians 2: 16 gives a list of things from which the Christian needs to be delivered. They are

described as "**shadows**". What do we want chasing shadows who have been brought to the glorious substance? We have no part in the shadows but we have in this new thing — this living organism — the body of Christ. The body is not a development of the shadows; neither is it a product of man's philosophy, "the body is of Christ." The body is derived from Christ just as Eve was of Adam, as the woman is of the man, so also the Assembly as the Body is **of** Christ; the product of His deep sleep at Calvary; part of Himself, in union with Him. then as the "body is of Christ," so it receives all the nourishment and direction it needs **from** Him. Our hearts are directed high above the shallows of the mind of man, and above the shadows of the law to our Head in heaven. All that we need to enable us to be here in the expression of His life, in the world which has cast Him out, comes down from Him in glory, and it reaches out to the members of His body in suited ministry through the joints and bands. The joints are for energetic movement and the bands for uniting.

May it be ours dear brethren, to cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils and look to our living glorious Head for everything. As we do so healthy, living, spiritual progress will be promoted amongst us and instead of furthering the scattering influences of the devil we shall promote the uniting and binding together of the brethren. Thus shall we further this blessed work of the whole body, increasing with the increase of God. All leads to the grand climax of Colossians 3: 4 everlasting in glory where we shall be with and like our blessed Lord for evermore. Amen.