

#68 “The Sufficiency of Christ”

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Along with a proper understanding of the sufficiency of the Bible, understanding the sufficiency of Christ is a fundamental pillar for living the Christian life and for developing proper theology as we grow in faith. Either Christ has all power and strength, or He does not. Either He is the One we need to depend on, or He is not. Either He can enable us to walk by faith, or He cannot. Sufficiency is an all-or-nothing concept, and we must decide whether we accept that Christ is indeed our all in all or if we are trying to ciphier away some of His glory for ourselves. Thus, given that God is jealous for glory, we had better live properly in light of His sufficiency so that He does indeed get all the glory.

To be sufficient is to be self-sustaining, self-adequate, and to have all power and strength. We can safely say that God is all of these things because He needs no one, and He is fully able to carry out His will and desires as He wishes. No one can thwart His plans, for He is God. There is none other. The grace of God enters into the picture in that He so loves His children, we who have received Jesus as our Savior, that He desires to involve us in His plans in the world. Thus, we have the invitation and opportunity to be co-laborers with the God of the universe, but how we understand the meaning of co-laborer makes all the difference.

In John 15:5, Jesus says, “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” Christ gives us a picture of our oneness with Him. It is a picture in which He is the vine, the source, the strength, and the anchor, and we are the branches, fully dependent upon Him for life and for power and strength to do anything of spiritual value. Thus, to be a co-laborer with Christ is to recognize and believe that we are fully dependent upon the grace and resources of Christ to do ministry. It is coming to understand and appreciate that we can’t do anything of spiritual value of ourselves. To do things without yielding to Christ is to come up with dead works (Hebrews 9:14), spiritually speaking, rather than true fruit of the Spirit. This is why fruit that is of the Lord is called the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), not the fruit of the spirit and of ourselves. True spiritual effectiveness is accomplished when we let Jesus empower us by His strength. Our strength is pitiful, but His is totally dominant and sufficient. We are insufficient and unable, but He is sufficient and able. As Jesus said in Matthew 19:26, “With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” Aside from Christ in us, we have no chance to see the kingdom advance, truth defeat lies, and people be set free from captivity to sin and the devil. Take away Christ and the most talented among us are rendered useless. This is why Christ is not impressed with natural abilities, but He desires faith (Hebrews 11:6). Simple faith in His power and in the power of His Word is what He desires. That way, He, not us, gets the glory. Of course, He is faithful to reward us for our cooperation in His work, but let

us not forget that, if it wasn't for His indwelling power, our labor would be of no value to Him. So to be a co-laborer with Christ is to be one who walks by faith and fully submits and surrenders to the will and leading of the Spirit of God. It is to be clay that doesn't resist the Potter (Isaiah 64:8) and a vessel that doesn't attempt to steal the glory from the treasure of Jesus Whom it holds (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Christ's sufficiency means, by implication, that we are insufficient of ourselves. Indeed the Scripture says this outright in 2 Corinthians 3:5 which says, "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God." There is a powerful, powerful truth here. Without Christ we are inadequate. We lack wisdom (Colossians 2:3), we have no strength (Philippians 4:13), and we can't accomplish ministry (Zechariah 4:6), just to name a few of our insufficiencies. However, with Christ indwelling us and as we by faith surrender to Him in humility and obedience, trembling at His Word (Isaiah 66:2), we become sufficient to do eternally effective ministry. So the saints of God go from an incompetent, defeated army which fools itself into thinking it is advancing the kingdom, and it becomes one that is truly spiritually powerful and fully able because of Christ in them.

The frightening thing is that we can be saved and have Christ in us and still not take advantage of His power if we trust in our own ability. Do we merely need God to help us as if we are combining our strength with His? Is His power a mere supplement to our efforts rather than the entire package? Proverbs 3:5-6 says to trust in the Lord with all of our hearts, meaning that we are not to trust in ourselves at all. It says not to lean on our own understanding, meaning that we are to fully rely upon the wisdom of God. It says that we are to acknowledge God in all things, meaning that He gets the credit and not us. Only when we fully believe that we are dependent beings for anything and everything can Jesus become our all in all, strengthening us despite our human weakness so that His power can be perfected in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9-10) and so that His glory can be seen (2 Corinthians 4:7). Instead of wandering about as fools in a flurry of vain self-effort, we should trust God to make our paths straight as we walk by faith in obedience and humility (Proverbs 3:6). But it all starts with a healthy, righteous, and humble belief in the insufficiency of man apart from Christ and a belief in the sufficiency of Christ which alone can make redeemed man effective for ministry (2 Timothy 3:16-17).