

The Grace of the Sufficient Christ Be With You

Colossians 4:10 *This salutation by my own hand – Paul. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. Amen.*

Almost 2000 years ago, a local church in Colosse also heard the last verse of Colossians. Maybe it was read by Tychicus, maybe Archippus, maybe someone else. When they heard that last ‘Amen’, the members of the church at Colosse, had to answer some questions inside themselves:

What does all this mean?

What now?

How should we then live?

Those are the same questions we are to ask at the end of this study. How can I summarise the message of Colossians so that there is a mini-version of Colossians in me wherever I go?

I am going to suggest one way is to take the opening and closing verses, together. Paul's letters open and close in the same way.

1 Corinthians 1:3 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

1 Corinthians 16:23 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*

2 Corinthians 1:2 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

2 Corinthians 13:14 *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.*

Galatians 1:3 *Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,*

Galatians 6:18 *Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.*

Ephesians 1:2 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Ephesians 6:24 *Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.*

Philippians 1:2 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Philippians 4:23 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

1 Thessalonians 1:1 *Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

1 Thessalonians 5:28 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

2 Thessalonians 1:2 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

2 Thessalonians 3:18 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

1 Timothy 1:2 *To Timothy, a true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.*

1 Timothy 6:21 *Grace be with you. Amen.*

2 Timothy 1:2 *To Timothy, a beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

2 Timothy 4:22 *The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.*

Titus 1:4 *To Titus, a true son in our common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.*

Titus 3:15 *All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.*

Philemon 1:3 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Philemon 1:25 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.*

It is as if the letter opens by saying – here is grace from our Lord Jesus coming to you. Get ready, because from the mouth of the Holy Spirit you are about to receive grace. Open your mouth wide, the tap of sweet, delicious grace is about to be poured. The content of the letter is going to show you some new angle of God's grace to you.

Then, the letter closes, and Paul says, “*Grace be with you*”. And now it is as if he says – let this sweet grace now empower you, comfort you, challenge you, change you, until the next time the tap is opened.

Grace to you is what Christ *has done*, who He is to you now, what potential resources there are for you. *Grace be with you* is the application – go and do it.

So as a final summary of this book, I am going to give you just two points. *Grace to you*, and *grace be with you* - two points that summarise the main thrust of this book. You could think of it as the front and back covers of the book.

And to illustrate, I would like to use the very graphic and powerful image the Lord Himself used in Jeremiah.

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.*

I. *Grace to You* – Jesus is All of God to You (Col. 1:18-19, 2:9-10)

Jesus Christ is the fullness of God. Jesus is the full communication of God to man.

A movie projector cannot do anything without a screen. To simply project the white light of whatever film it is showing outwards won't help anyone see the image. A large, white, reflective screen is where that white light bounces off and people see the image.

The Bible tells us that God in His essence is invisible, dwelling in unapproachable light. In His essence, no man can see Him and live. God's glory would be like that projector, true, but unable to be seen or understood by anyone else.

The Lord Jesus Christ is like the screen. He reveals the invisible God, He shows the glory of God - because He is God.

Jesus Christ, Very God of Very God, is the fountain. We sing of Him as the Fount of Life, as the Fount of every blessing. Indeed, He spoke of Himself this way a number of times.

John 4:14 "but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

John 7:37-38 *On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."*

In Jeremiah, God says *He is the fountain of living waters*.

Now think about that - the water of life. We drink normal water, and the effect is to give us life. We drink the water of spiritual life – living water, and our spiritual needs are met.
What are our spiritual needs?

We need to be reconciled to God. We need to be forgiven of our sins. We need to be delivered from darkness and conveyed into the kingdom of God. We need to be raised up from spiritual death.
Who does this? Jesus Christ.

Further, we need peace in our hearts. We need joy for strength. We need ongoing freedom from guilt, envy, worry, anxiety, anger, selfishness, pride, conflict with others, despair, hopelessness, and all the things that make us less than complete, less than fulfilled, less than useful to God and man.
Drink in the Lord Jesus, and the promise is, we can have these things.

Now notice that Jesus is not said to be a bottle of living waters. He is not said to be a large vessel of living waters. He is said to be a fountain of living waters.

Now think about that for a moment. Consider the image of a fountain.

It is *self-replenishing*. A fountain does not require that you add water to it to keep it going. A natural fountain is self-replenishing.

Secondly, a fountain is *overflowing*. A fountain is full. It has too much water, and bubbles over. If a fountain only had enough water for itself, by definition, it would not be a fountain. Something is only a fountain when it has so much water it cannot be contained.

Why is Jesus the Fountain of Living Waters? Because of what Colossians has taught us. He is the fullness of God. Jesus is God, and God is absolutely self-sufficient. His name is Yahweh – I AM that I AM. I exist because I exist. So all the life we need is found in Him, whose life is self-contained and self-empowered.

Jesus is the Creator, not the Creation. He is first in creation. **(Col 1:15-17)**. He does not need creation to sustain Him, to supply Him with life, he sustains the creation.

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men (John 1:4)

When it comes to spiritual needs, Jesus is pre-eminent in redemption. **(Col 1:13-14, 18-22)**

I have come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly (John 10:10)

Christ is truly the fountain of living waters. He is the source of life; He grants it originally in creation; He grants it a second time in regeneration.

The power and grace of Christ are self-sufficient, and they are overflowing.

Now you might ask, ‘In what way has this all-sufficient, overflowing Jesus Christ been given to me?’

A museum curator might take out a treasure-trove of newly discovered rubies, sapphires, gold, silver, and pearls to display them to the audience. But it would be strange, if a member of the audience got up and screamed, ‘I’m rich! I’m rich’ Those riches do not belong to him.

But this wealth of life I have just described does belong to the believer. Colossians taught us this in many ways:

Jesus has redeemed us (1:14); delivered us, qualified us (1:12-13); reconciled us (1:22); circumcised us (2:11); forgiven us (2:13-14); died with us (3:3); raised us (3:1), and completed us (2:10)

If you have embraced Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, then this fountain has already taken root within your soul. You have experienced the ‘grace to you’, and you have all the right and reason to experience ‘grace be with you.’

“We drink of Thee, the Fountainhead, and thirst our souls from Thee to fill”

Grace has come to you, and grace continues to extend to you.

There was once a tribe who lived in a very dry, arid area. They built their village around a large and old tree that seemed the symbol of strength to them. So much so, that they worshipped the tree. They brought offerings to it. The rest of the time, they were hunting, finding plants from which they

could squeeze out water. They had become quite skilled at learning which plant had roots with good water in them, which they extracted with care, and preserved every drop. Occasionally, during very dry times, people in the village, especially children, died, because of the lack of water.

During one dry season, a fire broke out and spread quickly through the veld. Before they could do anything about it, the tree they worshipped was on fire. They watched in tears as their symbol of survival in the desert burnt to ashes.

The chief instructed that the tree should be buried as a sign of respect.

The men worked for hours, digging around the roots, tying cords around it, and pulling. Finally, after hours of struggle, they wrenched the stump from the ground.

But where the stump had been was the sound of splashing. A small, spring of water was gurgling and bubbling where the tree had been. The tree had been strong all those years because it had sat right on an underground well. The villagers had been admiring its strength and worshipping it, while they were dying of thirst. Right under their feet was all the water they needed.

How many Christians admire what Christ can do? They admire His works; they admire other Christians, but ignore the person and promises of Christ right inside them?

That leads us then to what we do with that grace.

II. *Grace Be With You* – Live in the Fullness of Christ to Others.

This grace has been communicated to us, that we might communicate it to others. Christ is the fullness of God, Christ fills us up to completion – we ought to overflow into others. And we will, if we are drinking from the fountain. The closer you are to an inexhaustible fountain, the more your cup runs over.

Now, the Lord said that Israel had committed two evils.

Firstly, they had turned away from the fountain. The One on whom they should have rested their entire weight, on whom they should have depended entirely, they had abandoned. They transferred trust away from God. They had said – ‘The answer must lie in Jehovah-plus something else.’

Secondly, they had built for themselves cisterns. They had built reservoirs for themselves. Now think about that image of a reservoir.

A reservoir is *artificial*, not natural. A fountain is the natural supply of water. A vessel must obtain the water from somewhere else, maybe even from the fountain, and then keep it in itself. It is a secondary supply of water, not a primary supply.

A cistern is also *limited*. If you are drinking at a fountain, you do not worry about how much you drink, because the supply is never ending. But if the water is stored up in a jar, then there is only so much you can drink. You either have to save some for later, or if you choose to drink it all, then you know there is no more – the supply is exhausted.

The next thing about water in cisterns is that it is *deathly and sickly*. Everyone who has been out camping knows that running water is usually safer than water that has been sitting. Sitting water is far more likely to become stagnant, and unhealthy.

Fourthly, God says these cisterns are broken cisterns that can *hold no water*.

Now, Colossians is a warning against turning from the sufficiency of Christ to all kinds of

substitutes. Don't lean on your own law-keeping to save you (2:13-17).

Don't Turn to False Mysticism (2:18-19). Don't turn to false experiences of Christ that have no basis in His Word. Don't Embrace Asceticism (2:20-23).

All of these things are broken cisterns. They are leaky, limited, man-made and poisonous substitutes for Christ Himself.

In fact, any time we try to live life our own way, we are turning away from the fountain and drinking out of our own little reservoirs - entertainment, psychology, philosophy, wealth, health, popularity, pleasure, power, success, material goods, promotion, romance. Our own 'Jesus-plus' substitutes are just like broken cisterns. They are leaky. They require constant re-filling. What they give us is unhealthy.

If you have a natural fountain on your property – how would that fountain be most celebrated? How would you boast about your fountain to others? By buying bottled water and pouring it into the fountain? By piping water in from hundreds of miles away, and leaving the fountain untouched?

You glorify the fountain, when you drink of it, and your refreshment and joy in the fountain points others to it as well.

If we live life based upon continual drinking in of Christ, we will live a kind of refreshed, abundant life that draws people to the fountain.

Colossians has told us what that looks like:

To live a life where you are drinking of the fountain is the risen life. It is when you live in unity with other believers (3:8-15). It is when you let your church be all about Christ (3:15-17).

It is when you let your home be built on Christ (3:18-21). It is when you let your workplace be built on Christ (3:23-4:1). It is when you let your personal life be about Christ – your prayer life.

It is when you let your public life be about Christ – your testimony, use of time and tongue (4:2-6).

It is when you continue in the faith, like the faithful men of chapter 4:7-17.

So the real question is – what is it to drink in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Perhaps we should let our Lord Jesus answer that question for us.

John 7:37-38 *On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."*

To drink the Lord Jesus in is to believe who he is, and depend on it. If you need an illustration of it, Colossians 2:6 gives it to us.

Colossians 2:6 *As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.*

The way you received Jesus is the way you are to walk in Him. You received Him by believing that He was sufficient to save you from your sins. So you trusted in Him and obeyed. The call is to continue to do that. Believe that He is Sufficient to be your Christ as Your Helper, Comforter, Strength, High Tower. Whatever it is you need – forgiveness, righteousness, wisdom, patience, longsuffering, love, hope, comfort, endurance – Christ is the fountain of living water.

Go to the fountain. Look to Him directly and personally for who He is. Don't look to your substitutes first. The one you go to first is the one you trust the most.

How will you know all He is?

Col 3:16 – *When His Word dwells richly in you.*

Col 3:2 – *When your mind has been set on heavenly things.*

There was a man who was given a chest by his father, who was a ship's captain. There was a note with the chest which read "Take care of my riches." The man wanted to honour his father's memory, so he placed the chest in a special room in the house. Every day, he would come in, polish the brass lock, dust the chest, and occasionally oil the wood. In the meantime, he continued his difficult life as a leather-maker, only just making enough to feed himself and his family.

Years later, the man died, and his children decided to open the chest. The lock had rusted shut, so they had to break it open. Inside were the spoils of many voyages – gold, silver, pearls, rubies, emeralds, sapphires, diamonds, rings, necklaces, coins.

The man thought he was honouring the riches of his father by keeping them locked away, but in fact, he was not. The man wanted his son to experience those riches, not keep them locked away. How many Christians have the riches of Christ tucked away in some corner of their mind? They never open the chest. They remain in their struggles, while Jesus Himself lives within them.

To drink of Jesus is to know who he is to you, believe it, and embrace it.

To drink of Jesus also means you allow Him in, so you fellowship with Him.

Revelation 3:15-20 *I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. ¹⁷Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' -- and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked -- ¹⁸I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. ¹⁹As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. ²⁰Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*

If you are self-satisfied with your broken cisterns, then you will keep leaving Christ outside. But when you realise that living life your own way is leaving you poor, blind, miserable and naked, you will turn and see that the patient Christ has been offering Himself again and again.

Believe He is. Believe His Grace is *to you*. Live in obedience and His grace will *be with you*.

So Colossians says – *this grace has come to you*. The all-sufficient Jesus Christ has saved you – died with you and risen with you and your life is hid in Him. Therefore – you are complete in Him. If Christ is the fullness of God, then you are filled up in Him. That's the grace to you.

So the call now is – the same grace *be with you*. Live in light of what is true. Practise your position. Become what you are. Keep coming to Jesus for your every spiritual need.