

Supreme, Sufficient, Satisfied

Today we attempt an overview of the whole book of Colossians.

The reason I want to do this is to give you the big picture; like an eagle soaring over the landscape, taking in the whole lie of the land. Soon we will swoop down and be immersed in verses, sometimes mere phrases, and I do not want us to get lost in the details. When you study the Bible you must always be able to step back and see the big picture while you stoop down to examine the tiniest details. So today we are going to try to take in the whole argument of Colossians. It is one God wants you to know. If He didn't, He wouldn't have inspired this book, or preserved it over nineteen hundred years for us to have today. But He did, because its message is as crucial and timeless as when it was written.

Think of the book of Colossians as being a small ladder with three rungs, or steps. The Lord wants you to grasp and believe and embrace step 1, so that you can do the same for step 2 and then for step 3. When you are on step 3 you are thinking and acting and behaving as Christ wants you to. But you must grasp step 1 and 2 to get there.

I. God wants to get the glory through the preeminence of Jesus (Colossians 1:18-20)

Have you ever asked the question about someone else, "What made him do that?" Or perhaps you asked, "Why in the world did she end up doing that?" Maybe you have heard people say, "I just don't know what drives him?"

When people talk like that, they are asking about motives. They are asking "What motivates such a person?" "What is the controlling desire in their hearts that leads them to act or think in a certain way?" If you know what motivates a person, you know what they are about. Sometimes people speculate about peoples' motives. They say, "All she wants is the money." "He's just concerned about his image."

Now, have you ever read the Bible and asked, "What motivates God?" The Bible is full of the actions and words and thoughts and deeds of God, from cover to cover. So it is good and right to ask, "Why does God do what He does? What drives God? What is the controlling desire in God's heart that leads Him to think and act and move in a certain way?"

Some people are going to say, "Love. God does what He does out of love for the world." That is partially true, because all He does, He does in love. But it isn't entirely true, because what motivated God before there was anyone else to love besides Himself? What was driving God before He created the universe?

God has a motive in His heart which is much bigger than you and I, or all the people in the world, or all the created beings, past present and future combined. That motive is to enjoy His own glory. If you take the time to walk through the Bible you will keep finding that God does what He does mainly for Himself. Consider this list, taken partly from Desiring God Ministries:

God chose His people, both Old Testament Israel and New Testament church, for His glory.

God created us for His glory.

God rescued Israel from Egypt for His glory.

God raised up Pharaoh to show His power and glorify His name.

God spared Israel in the wilderness for the glory of His name.

God did not cast away his people for the glory of His name:

*"Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil. Yet do not turn aside from following the Lord . . . For the Lord will not forsake his people, **for His great name's sake.** (1 Samuel 12:20, 22).*

God saved Jerusalem from attack for the glory of his name:

*"For I will defend this city to save it, **for my own sake** and for the sake of my servant David." (2 Kings 19:34; compare 20:6)*

God restored Israel from exile for the glory of his name:

*"...Thus says the Lord God. It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but **for the sake of my holy name.** . . . And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name. . . . And the nations will know that I am the Lord. (Ezekiel 36:22-23; compare v. 32)*

God gave his Son to vindicate the glory of his righteousness:

God put [Christ] forward as a propitiation by his blood . . . *to show God's righteousness* . . . It was to show His righteousness at the present time. (Romans 3:25-26)

God forgives our sins for his own sake:

*"I, I am He who blots out your transgressions **for my own sake**, and I will not remember your sins". (Isaiah 43:25)*

God's plan is to fill the earth with the knowledge of his glory:

*"For the earth will be filled with **the knowledge of the glory of the Lord** as the waters cover the sea". (Habakkuk 2:14)*

Everything that happens will redound to God's glory:

*"From Him and through Him and to Him are all things. **To Him be glory forever.** Amen. (Romans 11:36)*

Now here is the primary way that God gets glory – **through Jesus Christ**. Verse 15 tells us He is the image of God – He is what God wants people to spiritually see when they are looking for God.

God gets glory when God the Son is seen to be preeminent – that is Supreme. If Jesus is seen to be the Ultimate Treasure, the Exclusive Way, the Most Satisfying Lord, the Only Saviour, the Most Powerful Lord, then God is glorified.

This is what is meant in verses 18-19.

Colossians 1:18-19 *"And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. ¹⁹ For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell,"*

Notice that verse 19 starts with 'for'. In other words, whatever is said in verse 19 is the ground, the basis, for verse 18. In verse 18 we see the preeminence of Jesus, and verse 19 tells us why – because the Father was pleased to have all the fullness dwell in Him. All the fullness of what? All the fullness of God – all the glory of God should be seen and known and shown and experienced in Jesus.

So what most of chapter 1 and part of chapter 2 is about is showing that Jesus is this preeminent, Supreme One who glorifies the Father because of this. In verses 15 through 16, Jesus is the Creator, not a creation; therefore He is first over creation. In verse 17 Jesus is the Sustainer of the Universe; therefore He is preeminent, because all things must depend on Him to exist. In verse 18 Jesus is the absolute head of the church; therefore He is preeminent. In verses 21 and 22, Jesus is the one through whom we are saved. He redeemed us. In verse 1:24 through 2:4 Paul shows that Jesus is preeminent in ministry. Paul does what He does and writes what He writes to uphold the fact that Jesus is Unique, Supreme, central.

Paul was afraid that the Colossians would move away from the Christ of the Bible and hold onto another Christ. They were being deceived into believing in a Christ who was not the Creator but had been created, or who was one of many little gods, or who could effect just half of salvation, the rest was up to them. I call that believing in a little 'j' Jesus. The little 'j' Jesus is a Jesus who is, in some way, less than the Jesus whom God is pleased to have all the glory rest in. He is the Jesus of the university professor – a wise and good man who said some very true things. He is the Jesus of Islam – a great prophet, who loved Allah. He is the Jesus of Catholicism, the son of Mary, who together with her must help you to get to heaven. He is the Jesus of religion, who left a great example, but everything else is up to you. He is the Jesus of the prosperity gospel, who is happy for people to love money and wealth more than him. He is the Jesus who is a faceless, distant person, who does not really impact me today except if I reflect on His example. He is the effeminate Jesus in the pictures sold at the flea markets who brings a kind of good luck to the home if you hang him up and feel kindly toward him.

But none of these are the true Jesus. And if your Jesus is too small, your faith will be likewise. What kind of trust and dependence and obedience and love can you truly give to a small 'j' Jesus?

So, there is firstly a foundation laid in Colossians upon which the house will be built, verse after verse, like concrete being poured, so that the house of faith in Him can be built on top of it.

Sometimes people say, 'give me 5 neat things to do this week. Don't give me theology. It's not practical. It's irrelevant.' But the truth is, you need a strong, deep foundation of Christology to survive. I am all for good application, but if you do not put your roots down deep into the solid truth of who Christ is, you will not be able to weather what Satan and the world throws at you. All that will sustain you is a deep rooted view of the preeminence of Jesus Christ – a view of the glory of God in the face of Jesus.

That is step one. The next step is this:

II. When Jesus Dwells inside You – You are Complete 1:27, 2:9-10

Certain chemicals react to each other when they are placed near each other, or mixed or heated: Potassium permanganate and glycerine; sulphur, saltpetre and charcoal. Mix them and there is a reaction. When glycerine ignites, you know potassium permanganate was added to it.

How do you know when Jesus has been added to a human being? How do you know when Christ dwells within? Because the reaction is completion. A human in whom Christ dwells is complete, sufficient, lacking nothing.

Paul says in verses 9 and 10 -

Colossians 2:9-10 *"For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; ¹⁰ and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power".*

Another statement of His supremacy, of His fullness; and verse 10 brings the reaction when you add the Supreme Person to a human life – Completion. Sufficiency.

Are humans searching for wholeness? Are they searching for completion? Are they looking for what will bring peace, joy, pleasure, meaning, security, fulfilment?

They are. What things do they try to fill themselves with so as to be 'filled up'? Relationships, sex, food, material things, good looks, success, a fine reputation, influence, knowledge. Every time something is tried to attempt to fill up a human, it is in some way glorified. Such things are esteemed as valuable in fulfilling the gaping hole in the human heart. But these things lose their glory because it is obvious that fame and fortune, power and pleasure, do not ultimately satisfy. The book of Ecclesiastes is a catalogue of what won't fulfil.

If there is something or someone that could fulfil the heart both now and forever, what do you think the value of that thing would be? Would it not be valued above money? Above pleasure? Above being loved? Above perfect health? Above all the gifts and experiences and things this world can offer? That something is Christ Himself. When He supplies the sufficiency that no one and nothing else can, He is glorified, God is glorified. It becomes obvious – the most valuable One is Jesus.

When it comes to creation – it is clear. Jesus is glorious because He made it all. When it comes to providence it is obvious Jesus is glorious because He sustains it all. When it comes to the church it is obvious Jesus is glorious because He is its head and focal point. When it comes to salvation, it is obvious He is glorious because He is the Saviour and the one we must come through to be saved.

When it comes to humanity – Jesus is glorious because He is the one who completes and satisfies where nothing else will.

Or, to put it another way, what glorifies God when it comes to Jesus, is that He completes you, that you are sufficient, lacking nothing.

The Colossians were being deceived into a Jesus-plus mentality. "We need Jesus plus circumcision, Jesus plus celebrating Jewish feasts, Jesus plus the worship of angels, Jesus plus the severe treatment of the body."

So Paul makes a strong argument to tell his readers that the Christ they received is the same Christ they need to continue walking in. In chapter 2 verse 3 he says '*Christ is all the wisdom and knowledge you need.*' In verses 11-12 he says '*Christ is the circumcision you need*'; you don't need anything else. In verse 13-15 he says '*Christ is the forgiveness of your sins*'; you don't need some

other mediator. In verse 16 through 19 he says '*Christ is the worship you need*'; you don't need Jewish forms or Gnostic forms.

But I wonder how many Christians today have a Jesus-plus mentality? I need Jesus plus a certain amount of money. I need Jesus plus a certain standard of living. I need Jesus plus my own personal safety, security and comfort. I need Jesus plus people treating me the way I want them to. I need Jesus plus life going according to my plans. I need Jesus plus anti-depressant pills. I need Jesus plus self-esteem teaching. I need Jesus plus the approval of people around me. I need Jesus plus a life of near perfect routines, schedules, plans to make me feel that things are under control. I need Jesus plus my health. I need Jesus plus my close family around me.

And do you know when Jesus is truly seen to be sufficient? When God removes those things, and you say, 'Jesus is still more than enough for me'. That's when it becomes clear that those things are of less value, and Jesus is the Supreme treasure.

Booth Tucker once preached on the sympathy of Jesus. A man came up to him after the sermon and "If your wife had just died, like mine has, and your babies were crying for their mother, who would never come back, you wouldn't be saying what you're saying." But an amazing thing happened. A few days later, Tucker's wife was killed in a train crash. Her body was brought to Chicago and carried to the same place where Tucker had preached for the funeral. After the service the grieving preacher looked at his wife, and then at the congregation and said,

"The other day a man told me I wouldn't speak of the sympathy of Jesus if my wife had just died. If that man is here, I want to tell him that Christ is sufficient. My heart is broken, but it has a song put there by Jesus. I want that man to know that Jesus Christ speaks comfort to me today. I want that man to know that Christ is sufficient."

But what if that isn't your experience? What if instead you show discontent, depression, despair, disobedience, fear, frustration, anxiety, anger? Does it mean Jesus is not sufficient? No, it cannot mean that because the Supreme Person is definitely sufficient.

So there are two possible explanations:

- 1) You have never trusted Him to come in and be your Sufficiency for salvation and life and forgiveness and wholeness. You do not experience it because Christ is not in you.
- 2) You have trusted Him, but you are not living in light of the truth.

That is the third step of Colossians. If Christ is really sufficient, then live that out.

III. His Sufficiency in You is Shown by a Living Faith, or His Sufficiency is Shown When You Become What You Are.

We often use the phrase 'become what you are'.

Colossians 3:3-4 ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

This is true of you. The sufficiency is there. Now, He says – live like it.

If your uncle left you with ten million Rand in the bank, and you never draw on that money, even when undergoing difficulty, that does not glorify your uncle's generosity. It is when you begin spending that it is seen.

You do not glorify the sufficiency of Christ, except when you take it by faith and live like it.

Colossians 2:19 - *'holding fast to the head'*. That's faith.

Colossians 2: 7 - *'rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith'*.

Faith is that action which understands the sufficiency of Jesus and rests on it, trusts it, depends on it, submits to it, obeys because of it. Faith is what happens when head knowledge has travelled the vital thirty centimetres down into the heart.

Sometimes while counselling someone with a problem – maybe marriage, maybe personal, I point them to some promise of Christ, some sufficiency found in Him. Sadly, the response will sometimes be, 'I know this, but...' In other words, they are saying that truth is true, but right now it is not what they need. It is not going to help me if I just trust in that truth.

But what is really happening is this – they have not meditated on that truth until the sufficiency of Christ becomes enough for them; until it becomes what they need in order to find peace instead of anxiety; hope instead of depression; forgiveness instead of bitterness; obedience instead of continued sin.

So when you see the sufficiency of Christ in the Word of God, and the answer is, 'I know that, **but**' you need to stop and say – 'no buts'. It cannot be 'Christ is sufficient, however...' He either is or He isn't. If He is, then the problem lies in getting that truth the vital thirty centimetres from your head to your heart by meditating on it until it becomes increasingly clear why Christ Himself is the very thing you need, and already have.

Go deep with understanding who Christ is and what He has promised to be and do for you on this side of the cross. When you meditate on that, faith springs up. Faith then acts out what you are in Christ.

Exactly how do you expect the world to perceive the sufficiency of Christ?

How does this list sound?:

Anxiety, worry, complaining, murmuring, frustration, fits of rage, depression, panic attacks, continual nervous habits, dissatisfaction, pursuit of vain things.

What about this list?:

Peace, trust, contentment, gratitude, patience, joy, hope, pursuit of heavenly things.

And that is what Paul argues for in the last section. He says in Colossians 3 and 4.

'if you have died with Christ, if you have risen with Christ – then live for heavenly things' (3:1-2)

'Die to the pursuit of fleshly things' (3:5)

'Put off the emotional reactions of people not fulfilled' (3:8)

'Since you are complete in Him, show forth patience, kindness and forgiveness and love (3:12-14)

and gratitude' (3:15&17), 'and joy' (3:1616)

And then, 'order your family life (3:18-21) and your work life (3:21-4:1), and your prayer life (4:2-4), and your public life (4:5-6) after these things.

God wants to be glorified in Jesus. God's glory in Jesus is seen in Jesus bringing total sufficiency to the life of a believer. That sufficiency is only seen when it is appropriated by faith and fleshed out in obedience.

Do you see how each step builds on the next? If you do not really believe He is supreme, you will not really believe He is sufficient. And if you do not really believe He is sufficient, you will evidence that by discontent, depression, despair, lack of security, disobedience.

By meditating on His supremacy, on his preeminence, you will grow your faith in His sufficiency. By believing in His sufficiency, you will have a living faith which works itself out in ways which will glorify God.

That is why your sense of fulfilment, peace, satisfaction, is tied to the glory of God. God has tied His glory to Christ. Christ has tied His glory to believers. You being satisfied, fulfilled, completed is not a side issue – it is the central issue – it is God's glory!

God has given you the Supreme Being of the Universe to dwell within you. Every resource is yours, if you will appropriate it by faith. If you do, you will magnify His glory, while you live a life of satisfaction.