

The All Sufficiency of Christ

Part 2

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[00:00:01] The Second Chapter of Colossians, Colossians Chapter 2 Colossians Chapter 2 and verse 5 Colossians 2, verse 5 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

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. [00:01:01] For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in him who is the head of all principality and power. A little further down Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath day, or of any other day.

Which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ. Let no man beguile you of your reward with a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which ye hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding the head. [00:02:14] From whom all the body, by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit together, increases with the increase of God. And then just a few verses from John's first epistle, chapter 4. 1 John 4 verse 1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world. [00:03:02] Hereby know ye the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God. He that knoweth God heareth us. He that is not of God heareth us not. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

[00:04:14] I want to speak very simply about the all-sufficiency of Christ.

It was in my mind earlier in the week, you remember our brother Alan Smart, spoke on the magnanimous nature of God, way beyond anything that we could possibly dream of. And yet such is the heart of God, that his purpose is not just to bring us into the very periphery of blessing, but to bring us into the center. And more than that, to bring us where his own beloved son is, so that we're near to him. And you may remember that he referred to those wonderful words in Luke 15. [00:05:06] Bring forth the best robe. Some might remember our brother Frank Broadley once suggested a

reading on Tyneside, and it was just on one phrase. Bring forward the best.

Bring forward the best.

That's what Christianity has in mind. Bring forward the best. And we had a splendid reading. You remember Alan referred to verses which almost certainly were touched on that Saturday afternoon. Remember Alan touched on the verse in Ephesians 1.

Taken into favor in the beloved. Not taken into favor in the Christ, but taken into favor in the beloved.

[00:06:09] That sense of relationship and love that belongs to it is very prominent in those verses. And then later our brother Arthur Goodwin read us some verses from John 4.

And I think he said at the time he was pursuing the same thing, but from a different aspect. Whoever would have thought that the thing that God seeks are worshippers. That's the prime thing that God looks for. He looks for worship. And I think Arthur very plainly said there what worship is.

Worship is in spirit and in truth.

And you may remember that he said he felt that in spirit was not...

[00:07:04] Years ago when, I mean I was just a young believer, but things really stick. And I remember reading with our brother George Davison where this issue was raised. And somebody spoke about the appropriateness of having a piano. And George said to him, brother if I thought that the use of a piano would improve the worship of God, I wouldn't stop at a piano, I'd have an orchestra. And I came past, go past quite often on my way to the meeting, a Baptist church which years ago had a name for being steadfast.

And now when you go by you can hear the throb of the drum and the sounds of the trumpet, how far we're drifting away.

[00:08:01] But as Nick said before, the issue is not with others, the issue is with ourselves. And all I want to do simply and briefly is to speak about the dangers that face the Christian company at Colossae. And the fact that the answer to each of them is found in Christ alone.

That's why I read to you verse 6.

As therefore ye have received Christ the Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him rooted and grounded in the faith and established.

I don't think that God repeats anything.

God works in an all varied way. When I was a boy we were a very poor family, and most of our pleasures were found in the countryside, we lived in the countryside. [00:09:04] So we became very conversant with flowers and leaves. But you pick up one leaf and you'll not find another leaf the same, it's the all varied wisdom of God. And the fact that all the flowers differed, flag irises where fields were not drained well, buttercups where the cows grazed, and now apparently they've come to the conclusion that buttercups are a tremendous help in maintaining the health of cows. The infinite

wisdom of God.

And I thought then, that must be God.

Everything, there's none of the same, not a constant reproduction. The reason I refer to this is, I never cease to be amazed at the way in which people are brought to God. I was brought to God by the faithful testimony of a Welsh Presbyterian lad who was in the forces at the same time as I was. [00:10:09] He was the corporal over our hut. And so he had to take down all the details. And your name and your address, age, religion.

So I said C of E.

He said, what do you believe? I said, oh, what's C and E believe? He says, no, I'm asking you, what do you believe? And so my back was against the wall. And then he told me about salvation.

And in all my years before, I had never heard it. He said things which I didn't like to hear.

Nobody likes to hear the fact that before God, you're absolutely lost. And it took some months for it to work through. But on the 13th of February, 1953, I remember going into a hut which was made available for religious purposes.

[00:11:09] Because I'd reached the position that Christ alone could save me.

Christ alone was sufficient for salvation. Now, Paul says, that's the key to going on. The Christ who alone is able to save is the Christ who alone is able to take us through. He's the solution to every problem. And so in the verses that we've read, we'll look very quickly at them. The first warning that was given to the Colossians was philosophy and vain deceit. It's interesting, isn't it, that vain is really a word which means empty. And it's side by side with a word which speaks about fullness. The word philosophy, from its basic construction, means the love of wisdom. [00:12:02] But it's drifted from that philosophy generally as men's ideas.

And men's ideas are not God's ideas.

I don't know how many of you have the Baxter Interlinear.

The Baxter rights were bought over by Baker Book House about three or four years ago.

And the same book is reproduced, but they've missed out the beginning, which is really important. It's absolutely vital.

There were men of God in the last century, and there were all sorts of sections. There were Austrian, Russian, German, English.

Men who spent their whole time, and we're talking about men, 40 and 50 years, [00:13:06] poured over the manuscripts to make sure that what we had in our hands and what we have in our hands today is as close as possible to the inspired scriptures that were given. And so in our land you have a man like Dean Olford.

Tremendous. They all approached it from different standpoints. But somebody said this, and I've no reason to think that it's wrong, that if you get four of the seven editors who agree, you're on pretty good ground. And these men were giants, things you'd never sort of think about, but they set out the principles of discerning. When scribes were copying out the scriptures, they didn't have lights like this. They had oil lights, and probably they'd been pouring over it for ages. [00:14:05] And then they see a line and they copy it. And then the next line has four or five letters which are exactly the same, and so they miss the line out. No indication in the manuscript that the lines are missed out, but then maybe 90 years later another scribe picks it up, and as he goes through, he realizes something has been missed out. So he leaves a gap. All these kind of things.

But at the same time as these men were spending their lives in ensuring that what we have in our hands is the trustworthy word of God, another movement was coming up. The so-called higher critics.

And they were destructive. They got impetus from the idea of evolution. And so before you knew where you were, Genesis was written off. And the damage that they did in Germany, in the European countries, [00:15:06] in our own land as well, carried on for many a year.

The idea of loving wisdom, according to scripture, we all should embrace, but when it gets into the hands of ungodly, unconverted men, there's no knowing where the damage will finish. Now look at the way that Paul combats it. He says, beware of philosophy and vain deceit.

Because he says...

Let me read you the words as they actually occur. You shouldn't get them wrong.

He says in verse 8, philosophy and vain deceit is marked by three things. It's according to the teachings, the tradition of men. It's according to the principles of the world. And it is not according to Christ. I just want to spend just a few minutes on the phrase, [00:16:04] not according to Christ. And that was really why I read you the words in 1 John 4.

There are three things there which are given, and they're unfailing.

There are three things which are given to discern between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. In the order in which they come, the first one is, is it according to Christ? The second, is it according to the world? And the third, is it according to apostolic teaching? That's what it means when it says, he that is of God, heareth us. I just want to refer to the first one particularly because it's the key one. Now if you have a new translation, you'll find that verse 2 has a slight but very significant difference. Hereby know ye the spirit of God. [00:17:03] Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God. Now, putting in words for the sake of understanding what scripture says is very important. Very often words are added where there is no original word in the manuscript.

And it's justifiably so, but sometimes it's put in when it really damages the sense. If you have a parallel as I have, you'll find that it reads, I'm going from memory, it reads, every spirit that confesseth Jesus Christ come in the flesh is of God.

As it reads in our authorised, it's a plain statement about the incarnation. Now I don't wish to be misunderstood in any way. [00:18:01] The wonder of the incarnation that the eternal God passed by the

level of angels and he became a man coming down into a condition where he was able to lay down his life. And constantly this week from the very beginning there have been reminders about the tremendous step that was made when the Lord came down into this world as a man and the whole purpose of God rests upon the fact that he did lay down his life and he rose again. But if you read it as it is in Darby and Kelly and the interlinear, if you have it, every spirit that confesseth Jesus Christ come in the flesh is of God. The emphasis there is not on the incarnation but who was it that came in flesh? And of course John would say, or rather Paul would say, [00:19:02] it's the son of the father's love. John would say it's the only begotten son who dwells in the bosom of the father. This is taken up actually in the second epistle the same expression, Jesus Christ come in the flesh, the person who came was the only begotten son of God and in the deep waters through which we've gone in the past few years, often in reading through scriptures it reminds you how vital the truth it is. I mean the other day I was looking for something in Hebrews and my eye alighted on the words in chapter 5 and verse 7 where it says, Though he were son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered, and having...

How's the word run on?

[00:20:03] He became the author of eternal salvation. Though he were son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered. And it brought back to my mind that Mr. Hall once said, I could build an impregnable case for the vital nature of the eternal sonship of the Lord Jesus on this word because there's a contrast. Though he were son, yet learned he obedience. Coming back then to the second chapter of Colossians, the first danger was that of philosophy and vain deceit.

The way of meeting it is in verse 9, For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and ye are complete in him. Several references have been made this week to the Gnostics, the knowing people, and they built a kind of a system where there's a tremendous distance between God and man [00:21:05] and somewhere in that, fairly close to God, they would say this is where the Lord Jesus came. And so in chapter 1, as we noticed, In him all the fullness was pleased to dwell. When you come to chapter 2, In whom all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

When he was down in here, in this world, it was unique, it was the first time that there was a vessel in this world where God could come down.

And he came down.

It's very interesting what it says in John chapter 1. John, referring to John the Baptist says, I knew him not, but he that sent me to baptise said, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding on him.

[00:22:01] He it is that baptises with the Holy Ghost. He was the only one upon whom the Spirit of God could descend with perfect complacency. So he says, In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And then he uses the words, And we are complete in him.

The moment you turn to the Lord Jesus and you trust him as a saviour, an awful lot of things are true. And one of the things which is quite wonderful is at that moment you're prepared for heaven. By the work of God you're prepared for heaven and you cannot be further prepared. It might take you a lifetime. It does take a lifetime before you begin to grow.

I'm going to speak for myself. Very often when I read scriptures I think to myself, how little progress I've made.

[00:23:03] But the fact of the matter is, as Nick said, when you're committed you do go on. And little by little you do grow. You grow in grace.

All of us should be on that plane. But the fact of the matter is, In Christ, in this world, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in him.

It completely demolishes the ideas of the philosophers and the fact that they pretended to a greater knowledge than that revealed in the scripture. When you come down to the verses that I read in verses 16 and 17, clearly it's talking about Judaism.

The new moons and the various offerings.

It wasn't the reality, it was a shadow.

[00:24:04] Now, one of the most interesting things out of every work of God, revival, it leads to a number of things. And as somebody has pointed out, recently it was pointed out in a magazine, I'm not really very conversant with the Mission Praise or those kind of hymn books. I think I have one of them, just for reference. But apparently Mission Praise has been overtaken by a book called Praise, I think. I read this in a magazine, so I may not have all the details right. And the writer was pointing out that something like 200 hymns had disappeared from this particular book. And it had been replaced by hymns not of the same caliber. I was quite surprised, but apparently in Mission Praise there is the hymn that was given out, [00:25:02] Lord Jesus, are we one with thee? O height and depth of love. Plainly reflects the clear teaching of scripture. It's been replaced by a hymn which seems to suggest that when the Lord was on the cross he didn't know what he was doing.

The idea, when it's raised about days and holy days and offerings, it's clearly talking about Israel. And it was no more than a shadow. The Wesleyan revival brought with it a tremendous wealth of hymns. We still sing some of them. We have them in our book. One of them was dropped, one of the best. We were told that every hymn that was in regular use would be kept, but it disappeared. I'm trying to remember the year. Oh yes, it refers to Christ himself as being all sufficient.

Never mind.

[00:26:05] It was at the best a shadow.

One of the results of the recovery of truth to which Nick referred earlier was that there became a particularly revived interest in the book of Leviticus. Now, we're all familiar with it, aren't we? We can all define what the offerings mean.

We know what the meal offering is. We know what the sin offering is. We know what the trespass offering is. Whether it's the kind of appreciation which touches our hearts and influences our lives is another matter.

But we have to say that a large part of the Christian world, and my first 19 years were brought up in this, was in something which ate what went on before. It was a high church that I was brought up in,

so beautiful architecture, wonderful music, [00:27:02] choirs and robed officials was all part of it.

But at the best, that kind of thing doesn't even attain to the shadow. I think it was Boyd, wasn't it, who wrote the words in one of his poems. Men to church must be enticed.

So have garments, costly priced.

Windows, artfully devised.

Teach men everything but Christ. Now that's met by the words in verse 17, which are a shadow of things to come. But the body is of Christ.

The reality is of Christ.

Just referring again to one of the offerings, the burnt offering, when you read through it, and I remember the first time I read it with the help of Brother McIntosh's book by my side, [00:28:02] I learned something straight away, that there was another reason for the Lord coming and laying down his life as sacrifice for sins. There was something else that needed to be done as well as bearing my sins.

And for the first time I saw a reference about the glory of God was in the matter of the burnt offering. Now you could go on for hours with this, couldn't you, referring to them, but the fact of the matter is, the substance is Christ.

The holy days, the offerings, the whole range of things that were provided, the actual priestly system.

At the best it was an outline, the reality is in connection with Christ personally. And again, when you look at your slow appreciation in these things, how gracious God is in dealing with us.

[00:29:03] When you come down later in the chapter to verse 18, let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up in his fleshly mind, and not holding the head from whom all the body by joints and bands having nourishment to minister and knit together increases with the increase of God. I don't know quite where I got these from, but for the first one, verse 8, I have written down rationalism.

For verse 16, I've written down ritualism. And for verse 18, I've written down mysticism. They're not my words, I must have forgotten. Sorry?

Thank you very much. I knew they came from somebody who's more able than I was. [00:30:03] But this idea of mysticism, turns against the whole idea of a full revelation. When we were talking, and there was some sort of cross-currents yesterday, about the wonder of the revelation, when you stop and think, and you take account of the verses that speak of it, only the Son, who was God, could make God known.

When you just sit and ponder for a little while the words from John chapter 1, the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him, then some of the sweetness of eternal relations and the joy and love which is proper to them, begins to get into your soul.

Mysticism, it tries to blur everything.

You know, nothing can really be known at all. [00:31:02] That's totally contrary to the whole drift of Christianity, which is the fact that God has been revealed. We cannot say we don't know who God is or what he's like. A full revelation has been given. That's what happened when the Lord came into this world. And the way that it is combated here is, and it's in a negative way to begin with, but it helps us on to a positive plane, from whom all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered and knit together, increases with the increase of God.

I think somebody pointed out earlier in the week that when we were looking at one of the key glories of the Lord Jesus, he is the head of the body. And I think somebody else said the body is not a broken down thing which is ineffective wherever it is spoken of. It's spoken of as a functioning body, [00:32:01] and several people have said, and it ought to be underlined primarily, that in the world where the Lord Jesus was cast out by way of the cross, there is a constant presentation for the pleasure of God, of the grace of Christ, through the body. But let's be sure of this. That will always go on.

I was reading a book recently of Charles Esme Stewart, the first book that I've read of his, and I was quite surprised when he said that the body carries on into eternity. Now, I don't know what the number is, but I'm sure that William Carey writes a hymn in the book which says, Now thy body, then thy bride.

I don't think there's anything more I want to say. I just come back to the verse that I read to you at the beginning, verse 6 of chapter 2.

[00:33:01] As ye have therefore received the Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him.

When you came to Christ, however you were drawn to him, and it will perhaps be one of the wonders of eternity to learn how exactly you were brought to the Lord, I have never ever heard of any other man who was brought to the Lord by a cow licking his hand. I didn't actually meet the brother, but I met somebody who knew him very well. He had gone to be with the Lord by the time I was on the West Coast. It was all traced back to a faithful sister in the Sunday school who spent the half hour she had with her children in teaching them one verse of Scripture. And the verse she had one day, [00:34:02] I'm sure I wouldn't have taken the verse, and I guess others might think the same. It was an unusual verse. It's a verse from Isaiah chapter 1, and it says, The Ots knoweth her master, and the As her master's crib, but Israel knoweth not.

He was only at Sunday school, I think for about a year and a half, and then they moved over to the West Coast. His people became farmers, and I think he didn't go to Sunday school after that. But he became a farmer, and I think he must have been a kindly farmer. Years ago, there was compassion in farming. I earned my pocket money as a boy on a farm, and when I went to get the cows, the farmer said, The pace of the herd is the pace of the last cow, because the last cow had a problem with its legs. So you just put your hand on this cow, [00:35:01] and it went along slowly, and that was the pace of the herd. When this man was in his late fifties, by the way, I ought to have said, he learned the verse of scripture when he was about six or seven. But when he was in his late fifties, he brought the cows in for milking, and in those days, they used to have a kind of a system where there was a chain, and it had a ball, and a piece of iron. It used to go through, and of course, when it got through the circle, it wouldn't come out. He bent down to get the circle, and when he lifted it up, like a

flash, there came into his mind, The ox knoweth his master, The ass her master's crib, But Israel knoweth not.

And he said to himself, Here am I, fifty years further on, and I'm a stranger to God. But he got saved that night. Wonderful things that God has done. [00:36:01] The key from this is, Christ is all-sufficient, and at the time when you came to the Lord, however you were brought to Him, surely one of the things that you said is, Christ alone can meet my need. Paul says, that is the way to carry on, and he uses the words, rooted and founded.

The first, of course, is the fact that you are what you eat.

I don't know if any of you have ever been to the Isle of Wight. It was my parental home for many years. But on the back of the downs, on the south side, there's quite a remarkable display of, I'm not very good on bushes, hydrangea?

They're multicoloured.

There are about eight or nine different colours. It goes from red, to pink, to light purple. And the only difference is, that the people, they sell them of course, [00:37:01] that the people put different things in the soil. It's what is drawn from the soil that makes the plant, or the bush, or whatever else, it is.

And that's exactly right. What you take in conditions what you are.

And I think there were many exhortations this week to make sure that what we draw is from the living head. Wonderful words.

Holding the head, from whom all the body, by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, knit together, having nourishment ministered, increases with the increase of God.

May God use our readings and the ministry this week to that end.

And to pick up the thread of next, that we are encouraged to go on in this assurance [00:38:01] that day by day we live our lives in expecting to hear the Lord's voice and to be called up to glory. Amen. We sing the hymn 478. 478. Savior, Lord of the world, despise thee, all God's angels, you are a marvellous glory, great in man's nature, great in God's glory, blessed evermore. 478. Savior, Lord of the world, despise thee, all God's angels, you are a marvellous glory, [00:39:05] great in man's nature, great in God's glory, Lord of glory, Lord of glory, blessed evermore.

Amen. Then the Saviour, then the Saviour, [00:40:01] Was the great atonement day.

O for grace to share thy sorrow, When our Lord was crucified.

While we wait the hourless morrow, When the rain has glorified.

Thy confessors, thy confessors, Learn thy mourning and thy crying.