

Our Sufficiency

2 Corinthians 2:12-3:6

8/20/06

Intro

We all need more diligence, self-control, love, joy, peace, fruits of the Spirit, we see these, but how does God expect us to be this way. This morning we will be exploring what is available to the Christian through the New Covenant that has been established by Jesus Christ. We are talking about Christian living, what our lives should look like, but more importantly, what is the *cause* that will bring about a lasting change. We all know what we should be like, that is easy, but the resource to bring about that change, where will we find it?

Let's look at the passage to get a peak at what Paul has to say on the matter.

Read 2 Corinthians 2:12-3:6

2 Corinthians 3:5 “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,”

Let's take a look at the characteristics in Paul's life and how this shows us our sufficiency.

I. Follow Christ In His Triumph

- Paul had come to Troas, for a door had been opened to him to preach the Gospel, but Troas would be for another day. (Acts 20:6-12)

A. Triumph is *not* circumstantial vv. 12-14a

- Even though the door was open, Paul had no rest in his spirit. Titus is no where to be found. He was bothered, agitated in his spirit.
- Not only in this circumstance, but Paul also went through beatings with rods, stonings, ship wrecks and in ALL these things God was still leading him in triumph.
- Things that may look like defeat can actually be victories. e.g. Christ on the Cross—He defeated sin, he triumphed over death.

Colossians 2:14-15 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. (Same Greek word for triumph)

- From a worldly perspective, things were not going well. But Paul had his eyes on the Lord.
- We've all experienced let downs, you expect things to go a certain way and they don't go as planned. Ever had things not go as you thought they would?

Illus. – When things don't go as planned... the ceiling fan

- Why? Paul knew that the Lord was using these things for His glory and for Paul's growth. He trusted God's plan, even if he didn't understand.
- Things happen; God allows curve balls to be thrown. Paul understood, just as we need to, that God wasn't trying to destroy him, but was using these things to grow him and mature him.
- The world thinks victory comes from an attitude of "If it's to be it's up to me." Not so in the kingdom of God.

App. – It's not about what the situation appears to be, but who is doing the leading? What is the key to being "Led in Triumph"? Who are you following? We are to be "in Christ..." Abiding in, resting in, trusting in, daily relating to, holding fast to, relying upon, hoping in, looking to, and waiting on— Christ!!

- As we do this, our lives will be marked with victory in trials, over sin, and in challenges.

Romans 8:37 "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." (Turn to this passage)

- What a fantastic promise! God will ALWAYS lead in triumph, our part? Follow him in faith. It is really quite simple.

App. – Victory over what, triumph in what? The world, the flesh and the devil

I Corinthians 15:57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

John 16:33 "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

- Victory in the Christian walk is something to be *received* (by faith in humility) not *achieved*.

B. As you follow Christ, you are His aroma vv. 14b-17

- The two are inseparable, if you are following the Lord Jesus, you'll be triumphant and by virtue of this you will give off His aroma.
- We as believers are giving off an aroma
- This fragrance is diffused, manifested through us by God. Again, not a fragrance we are manufacturing—thank God! It's a fragrance that comes by knowing the Lord.

Illus. – Much like a flower gives off a natural aroma, the aroma of Christ will be given off naturally in your life.

- V.15 Three places that this aroma wafts: 1) To God 2) To Fellow Believers 3) The Unregenerate
- V.16 Two types of responses: 1) Death (A stench) 2) Life (A pleasant smell)

Illus. – I like Italian food! But not Indian Food.

- We should be surprised at the world's rejection of us, Jesus told us plainly this is how it would be:

John 15:18-19 “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you”

Illus. – Acts 7:59-60, Stephen getting stoned by the Jewish mob, “Lord do not charge them with this sin.”

Monumental witness for Christ! Looks like a defeat, but truly a victory!

- Who is sufficient for these things? Who deserves these wonderful realities? Who can achieve to this standard of being the representatives of Christ? (We'll see the answer in 3:5-6)
- V.17 There were plenty of false teachers who thought of themselves as sufficient in Paul's day.
- Peddling the God's Word, using it as a tool to build wealth rather than build up believers. Not a whole lot has changed in the last 2000 years!

II. Trust God For Your Sufficiency

- Paul now wants to confront the issue that had been following him around every where he went—The Judaizers!

- Paul was challenged on his authority, how does he defend himself? He doesn't look to a man, but says “The proof's in the pudding” If you need a validation, look to the people who are being ministered to; pagans turned Christians.
- He asks the question “Do I need a letter of recommendation?” Look at the lives of the people I've ministered to! That is proof enough of my calling.
- Men can talk all day, and write accolades, and complement each other on how well they've done, but when all is said and done, what has really been accomplished?

Illus – Emmys, Oscars and Hollywood “And the award for ‘Best Secondary Supporting Actress Who Played a Trumpet Solo and Has Short Hair’ goes to...”

A. Let Jesus Write Your Epistle vv. 1-3

App. – Are you aware of this? Not only can people smell you, but they are reading you! You may be the only Bible or commentary a non-believer ever reads. You are being read... Who is doing your writing? So how do our lives become an illustration of the Message of Christ? Let Christ write your epistle.

- V. 2 Paul shows the intimate nature of their relationship
- He also shows their relationship to the world “Known and read by all men.”

- Not so much a “How to” but a “*Whom to...*”
Whom are we relating to? If it’s Christ, He is the One who will do the writing.

John 15:4-5 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. 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.

Illus. – You don’t hear the grapes straining in the vineyard...

- It’s not rules, regulations and a procedure to follow, it’s a living relationship with Christ Jesus! Daily walking with Him.

**Illus – My mom used to measure me when I was growing up
Illus – Eating the ruler to make you grow...**

- The epistle must be one that is written on the heart, it can’t be merely an outward acceptance of a creed, we must come humble and allow the Lord to change us from the inside out.

B. God is more than enough vv.4-6

- Sufficiency—also translated “able” in 2 Timothy 2:2, our capability of completing a task.

Illus – “Sufficient” sounds like it just barely met the requirement. In California, restaurants are graded by the health department A-B-C, but in Oregon I understand there is a sign at the door that says, “met.”

Ephesians 3:20, Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

- We want to be clear about *cause* and *effect* in the Christian walk, this is central to us being led in triumph, being Christ’s aroma and His epistle.
- V.5 The question was asked “Who is sufficient?” Nobody is! Not in themselves. “We have such trust through Christ toward God”
- In and of myself I do not possess the ability to accomplish what God has called me to do! He has given us a relationship with Him to walk in obedience.
- God has made us sufficient (able) in the New Covenant; this is the Gospel, the New Arrangement, so to speak.
- Not only did the Spirit give you life when you got saved, but the Spirit continues to give you life (resource, the cause) as you live day to day.

Conclusion

We all can agree that we cannot be triumphant in our Christian walk, we cannot be the aroma of Christ, we cannot be His living epistle in our own ability—But the source of these things is found by simply abiding in the Lord.

Illus. – Like a child abides in the mother.