

The Sufficiency of God for Holy Living

by Jeff Christianson

God's sufficiency is the key to living a godly, God-pleasing life, and it's available to us through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Duration: 36:00

Scripture: John 14:26, 2 Corinthians 3:3-18, Colossians 1:27, 2 Peter 1:3

Topics: "Holy Living"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of living a life that reflects the truth and love of Jesus Christ. He encourages believers to be a shining light and a source of salt in the world, so that others may be drawn to Christianity. The speaker highlights that God alone can provide the resources needed to live a godly life, and that the New Covenant allows believers to rely on God's grace rather than their own performance. He emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of believers, writing letters of Christ on their hearts and enabling them to be living testimonies of Jesus to the world.

Transcript

If you have your Bibles, let's turn to the book of 2 Corinthians. And I'm going through the Bible in Glenwood Springs. Anybody familiar with Colorado at all? Woo, Colorado! Any Broncos fans in here? 2 Corinthians chapter 3. And tonight's message is entitled, God's Sufficiency for Godly Living.

God is sufficient for everything that you need pertaining to life and godliness. And so we're going to look at that in 2 Corinthians as Paul describes that. But let's first pray.

Father, thank You that You haven't left us alone to figure out how to navigate life. But we have Your very Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, living in us. And Lord, You've given us Your Word.

And Lord, by Your Spirit, You want to guide us. Lord, You want to lead us. And so we're asking this evening that You would capture our hearts.

That You would focus our attention. Lord, that You wouldn't let any of the distractions that we may have, Lord, distract us from this evening. Lord, that we would know Jesus.

And so focus our attention on Your Son, Jesus Christ. So Lord, as we break the bread of life, the Word of God together, Lord, just bless, pour out Your Spirit, and lead us into all truth. This is what we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Do we begin to commend ourselves, Paul said to the Corinthians? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to You, or letters of commendation from You? You are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read by all men. Clearly, You're an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.

And so Paul was dealing with some difficulty. If you're familiar with the Corinthian church, it was a carnal church. And there were problems in the church.

And so Paul hears about the problems, and he writes 1 Corinthians, and he really exhorts them. And he begins to send them a message of rebuke. And what happens is the people received it, and they began to change.

But there was a section of the church there in Corinth that said, who does this guy think he is? Bringing a message of a pretty strong word to us. And so Timothy comes and tells Paul in 2 Corinthians. And Paul begins to really share his heart.

And they say, Paul, you don't have authority. Who are you? Some of the people were saying. And then Paul begins in chapter 3, and he says, do we begin to commend ourselves? He says that I don't need, as others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you.

You are our epistle. And this is what the Lord wants. The Lord wants to turn our lives into walking, talking letters of him.

Maybe you've heard it said that somebody might not read the gospel according to Mark or the gospel according to John. But they'll read the gospel according to you. And so here Paul is saying that we are epistles, or that is letters, walking, talking letters.

He wants to make us, you and I, a living explanation of who Christ is and all that he offers. So as we live our life in community, as we live our life, as we do life, that we would have people look at us and they'd see Christ. And this is a great opportunity.

We go about our daily responsibilities. Others are reading our lives, as it were. And so while they're observing us, they can actually be learning of the truth and the love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He's working in and through our lives, and people see that, don't they? And we're that bright light, and we're that salt. And people look at our lives and they say, well that's what Christianity is. And there's a hunger for it, and there's a desire.

Tell me, how do you live your life that way? And so, clearly you're an epistle of Christ, he says to them. Ministered by us, written not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God. Now this might sound like, and as I read this, it sounds like too much to hope for.

The Lord declares in His word, this can become very clear though. Look at this, what does it say in verse 3? It says, clearly, or manifestly, or it's plainly recognized, it's obvious, it's unmistakable, that you are an epistle of Christ. And this is what's available for us, ministers or servants of the new covenant.

When we live, when you and I live by the grace of God, that is, as we draw upon the very life of Christ, and as we live our lives, it is something that God does in us, isn't it? It's not something that we manufacture for Him. We come fully engaged, we come humbly, we come dependently seeking the Lord, and really what

it's about is a relationship with Jesus Christ. Clearly you're an epistle of Christ, written not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God.

You're manifestly an epistle of Christ. And Paul ministered God's truth to these people in Corinth. And in these letters being written, they were not written with ink as ordinary letters would be written.

I mean, ink, it's subject to fading, it's subject to erasure, it's subject to destruction. And he says you're manifestly an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, not written with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God. It's God's Holy Spirit working in their lives, in your life, in my life today.

And God's Spirit is writing letters, and their lives become a living explanation of Jesus Christ to the community, to the society, to the city around them. And so notice where the Lord is inscribing these living letters. Not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of flesh, that is the heart.

That is the soft, supple, responsive heart of man. That God wants to write on your heart. He wants to write a life, He wants to minister His life.

See, the old covenant message of the law was written on stones. Not on tablets of stones, and the new covenant message of grace is written on the hearts. It's written on lives.

That's how God works. All of us, when we walk with humility, when we walk by faith, when we depend on God. And this is a work from the inside out, making us letters, living letters of Christ.

And so he continues in verse 4, and he says, We have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit, for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. These are some powerful truths here that Paul wants us to know.

Paul wants us to walk in the sufficiency, the adequacy, the superior resources, the competency of God Himself, of Christ. Because in our natural humanity, we're so used to living by our own abilities. God wants us to die to that self, that independent self-life.

And He wants us to learn to draw upon Christ, Christ who is the head, we who are the body. And so we have such trust through Christ toward God. Paul's confidence in looking at these qualities was directed toward God.

It's a relationship, it's available to us. Not a self-confidence, but a God confidence. See, these are things that God must produce in our lives.

There's no room for believers to trust in themselves. Not confidence in self or own ability, not that we are sufficient or adequate or competent of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves. And see, this message is radical that Paul is saying.

You mean anything, Lord? Yes. See, he's saying that without me you can do nothing. Do we believe that? Hey, nothing of eternal value.

Sure, you can do something temporary. Humanity, we can build nations. We could put a man on the moon and maybe one day Mars.

We could do a lot of things of ourselves, of our own natural humanity. But what God is saying here, anything that's going to last forever, for all eternity, must be sourced in God. Are we able to sort that out in our own lives? Are you able to right now think in your life, what is of God and what is of me? I have to ask myself those questions.

Lord, am I the source of this? Or God, are you at work? Is it your sufficiency? There's no room to trust in ourselves. Because we're not the source of the wonderful traits of godly living, like knowledge and holiness and the power of God. Those things must come from God and it's got to be God at work in us.

It's got to be the power from above, not the power from within. Our sufficiency, the Bible says, is from God. And so when we live in humble dependence, the Lord's supply, what the Lord brings to our life, becomes our needed sufficiency.

We need God. When we live in humble dependence, our sufficiency is from God, who made us sufficient as ministers of the New Covenant. We're ministers of the New Covenant.

Minister, what does that word mean? It means servant. New Covenant, it speaks of a new way of relating to God. It's a new arrangement.

Remember the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant was, we related to God based on law. It was based on performance.

It was based on obedience. It's no longer that way, is it? In the New Covenant, we have an open door for God to work by grace. It's really relating to God by grace.

We serve God by His resources. It's God at work, not man. Day by day, as we live our lives, as we serve God, the Lord God Almighty, there's a work of grace going on in our hearts.

And so, where are we as believers in Jesus Christ? Where are we going to find resource to live a godly life? We all want to live godly lives. We all want to live that life that people would look on and they'd say, you know, that's what a Christian should live like. We all want to live a life that is honoring to the Lord, that pleases the Lord.

But where do you get the wherewithal, the resource, the strength? He's saying here, not that we're sufficient of ourselves to think of anything coming from ourselves. Our sufficiency is from God. It's a message of grace.

It's a message of the very life of Christ living in us and through us. Where do we get it? Well, the scriptures answer this question in a two-fold manner. First, we have to agree with God.

We have to realize we are not the source of anything we need. That crucifies the flesh, doesn't it? That affronts the intellect. That says, what do you mean I'm not the source? I've got some talent.

I can do some things. God wants us to say and agree and realize that we're not the source of anything that we need. That's number one, and number two is God wants us to understand that He is the source of everything we need.

See, humility says, I don't have what it takes. Faith says, but God, you do. Faith says, God, you have what it takes to live this life for your glory, for your purposes.

Humility, there's no way. I can't live this life. Those two realities, humility and faith.

When you live that way, you're accessing and walking in the resources and the sufficiency of God. And so that's what Paul was reminding them at Corinth. He was saying, look, yes, I'm an apostle.

I'm called by God. I know some of you guys are saying I have no authority to write you a letter like this. And he says, you guys are my living epistles.

Look it. You're walking with Jesus. But it isn't a work of Paul.

It was a work of God and Christ in them. Number one, our inadequacy. That's the first matter the Lord desires to clarify for us.

We're inadequate. We don't have what it takes. Not that we're sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves.

But our sufficiency is from God. See, we got to realize that we don't have personal adequacy. We're inadequate.

It's very comprehensive, the Bible teaches. We can't expect anything godly or eternal will source from us. That's what God says we have to agree with him on that subject.

We don't have the resources that can save a soul. We can't transform a life. We can't cause the Lord's church to be built up, to be edified.

And I'm telling you, that's a drastic difference and that's a different perspective on life than what I initially held. About, you know what, I can do those things. I can help God out.

I can work in this way and that way and make a life. And God's saying, no, it's got a source in me, Jeff. Because man's natural mind assumes we must be the source of all that's needed for daily living.

But God's word repeatedly warns us not to adopt this viewpoint. For example, the psalmist proclaims such. He says, vain is the help of man in Psalm 108, verse 12.

He says in chapter 146, he says, Do not put your trust in princes, nor in a son of man in whom there is no help. Jesus said the same thing. John 15, 5, without me you can do nothing.

And God's calling us this evening to agree with God that without him we can do nothing. Paul taught the same thing that we have no confidence in the flesh that is in human resources in Philippians 3, 3. And I think too often the church underestimates our inadequacy, our personal inadequacy. I think we overlook our personal insufficiency.

We try to convince ourselves we can become sufficient. Just give me a little bit more time, a little bit, let me try harder, more effort, more preparation, and I can make it. God's saying no.

Because that approach is in direct disagreement with God. It disagrees with the Lord. God wants us to agree with him.

We need to say, God, you're right, I'm wrong. That's called repentance. See, but there's great hope here.

Maybe you're thinking, yeah, well, boy, I'm living my life by my own best wits. You know, I was taught, I learned when I was in the military, you know, be all you can be. That's what it was back then.

I don't know what it is now. It's the Army of One or something. You know, you go into the military, you're thinking, look, I'm going to make this happen.

We grew up in America. I grew up with a dad that was a farmer. You know, he's a self-made man, and, you know, pick yourself up by your bootstraps.

I don't need anybody's help. And just natural humanity, the way I think, the way we think, the way America thinks, we don't need God. And sometimes that creeps into Christianity.

And it's time to learn to trust in God, because God can do no work, no mighty work in our lives if we're full of ourselves. Remember John the Baptist said, I must decrease and He must increase. But if I'm filled with self and my own adequacy and my own abilities and my own talents and my own resources, God can't work, He won't work.

And so Paul is telling the Corinthians, he's saying, you guys are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God. And not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything from ourselves, but listen, here's the good news, here's the hope, our sufficiency is from God. See, when we begin to face, and sometimes it takes a while, if you're like me, man, you know, I have to learn things the hard way.

I could be hard-headed in this, and I'm going to try, and I'm going to be pushing through, and I'm going to be tenacious, and I'm going to see this thing through, and I'm going to make it happen. And then you find out you're unable, and you face your spiritual inability to produce the kind of life that God is looking for. And I underestimate the extent of my deficiency.

You know, and sometimes we just think, well, I'm just not able to produce as much as God desires. But see, the Lord has a more radical viewpoint. He says you can't supply anything.

Nothing. That's radical. You don't hear that message.

Paul has it right here. There's no sufficiency in and of yourself. God wants us to agree with Him.

But see, He has a remedy. And that remedy is the adequacy, the sufficiency, the superior resources of God. That's the second issue here.

Our sufficiency is from God. Just as we're totally inadequate to supply what we need for life, God is fully adequate to be our comprehensive, all-encompassing source and resource for living this life. I know what it's like to live in a rat race.

I know what it's like to push and to want to see things happen and to just go, go, go, go. And God's saying, look, I'm your adequacy. I'm your resource.

I want to train you and fill you and flood you so that you can live a godly, God-pleasing life. It's available. It's available right now.

This evening, you can walk out of here with a changed mind. You can walk out of here and not be the same ever again by drawing on the resources and the sufficiency that's in Christ. That's the message that

Paul has for us.

God's sufficiency for godly living. God is over and abundantly adequate for our source for living. Here's what the psalmist said about this.

Through God we will do valiantly, for it is He who shall tread down our enemies. Happy is He who has God of Jacob for His help, whose hope is in the Lord, His God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them. You know, the psalmist knew creation.

He knew that God spoke and flung the universe into existence. He knew that God spoke and the seas were teeming with fishes and it's that God, it's the power of that God that is available to give us resource to live our lives. That's what the psalmist said.

Jesus said the same sufficient provisions. He who abides in me bears much fruit. We want to live fruitful lives.

We want to bear fruit in our lives. I do. I know you do too.

And it's available in Christ. He who abides in me. It all comes back to Jesus, doesn't it? It's all about Him.

It's all about Jesus and a relationship with Him. And abiding, living, walking, talking, practicing the presence of Jesus. See, this is the kind of message that speaks of an exchanged life.

Exchanging my inadequacies for His adequacy. Exchanging my weakness for His strength. It speaks of a crucified life.

It speaks of I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. The life I live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.

It's Christ in you, the hope of glory. Hope of glory one day, but the hope of a glorious walk with Him today. And it's available.

Our sufficiency is from God. And He who abides in me bears much fruit. And Paul said the same thing.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Oh, these are beautiful truths. But I want to tell you something.

This is what I call the meat of the Word. This is what Paul calls the meat of the Word. Because these things here are spiritually discerned.

How are you going to learn to live that Christ is in you? Are you going to walk in that? Man, this has to be revealed from heaven above. God's got to show these things to me. How do I live this? And really, the grace of God isn't about a how.

It's about a who. It's about a person. It's about an abiding relationship with Jesus Christ.

God is the source of our sufficiency in all that pertains to developing godly characteristics. Our sufficiency is from God. And so as I'm going verse by verse through 1 and 2 Corinthians, I stopped right here in chapter 3. I would normally cover the whole chapter.

There's only 18 verses. But at church last Sunday, God gripped my heart. I was reading these things and I'm thinking, Lord, am I living this way? Am I walking in Your sufficiency? Or am I just marching forward on my own adequacy, my own best efforts? God, do a work.

I don't want to live this way anymore. We're living in these last days and you look around and it's falling apart, the world. We need Jesus.

We need a sufficiency. We cannot live by our own resources anymore. There won't be a change in this world unless it's Jesus working in and through us.

That's where we're at. Our sufficiency is from God. And He's our resource for living the Christian life and it's found in God alone.

We're the recipients of God's grace. A fully adequate supply. It's available today, right now.

Sometimes I think, man, I wrestle and I struggle. I'm running a Bible college in the Colorado Rocky Mountains. You guys got to come out and check it out.

It's awesome. We're in the middle of God's country. And what I love about this place is that you go out at night and you can see the stars.

Now, I grew up over here, Diamond Bar. I went to Diamond Bar High School. Graduated in 1984 over there.

And Walnut. And I ran in these areas and I know this area pretty well. But man, I always wanted to live in the mountains.

I thought, who could live in these beautiful places? And God one day said, well, you can. And so I moved out there and I took over a youth camp. We planted a church called Calvary Chapel Glenwood Springs.

And I worked at the Bible college and I asked the director, I said, hey, can I take some students with me? We planted an extension campus. Now, right now is our first week. And so I told him, hey, you guys pray for me.

I'm going out to California and I'm going to be teaching at a church. Crazy Jerry Brown, you know, he just loves me so much. He's bringing me out there and I'm nervous, I'm scared.

And I just love this man. He's been a blessing to me. He's on our board as well.

And it's a good thing. And so what they're having right now for dinner tonight is elk, fresh elk. We shot an elk up there in Aspen.

We're also having bear meat tacos. So pray for our students. I like beef better, but the tacos are pretty good.

So we, you know, the students come from all over the United States and we take them to the mountains and, you know, it's a little bit different up there. So any hunters in here? Anyway, I love doing that stuff, but it's organic, by the way. Back to the word of God.

Our sufficiency is from God. We're recipients of God's grace. He's got a supply.

And so we often will think of ourselves as manufacturers, but God's the source. God wants us to agree with Him. Not only that we're inadequate, but He wants us to agree with Him that He is adequate.

Now, let me close with verse 6. And what it says here, I think is very important because what God wants to teach us is that God alone can supply what is needed to live our life. We have to be convinced of that. And it says in verse 6, who has made us sufficient as servants or ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit, for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

I want you to think about that for a second. The difference between living by God's supply and by your own resources. Listen, it says here, it's a life or death matter.

This is one of the areas of Scriptures that deals with life or death. Because if you live by your own resources, it's death. It's death to relationships.

It's death in your own walk. But when you live by the Spirit and the resources of God, it's life. And it will change your life and it will change those relationships that you have.

Because the letter kills and the Spirit gives life. Attempting to live the Christian life by our own capabilities will leave us exhausted, discouraged, and condemned because the letter kills. And that's what the Bible is saying here tonight.

The letter of the law, the old covenant, the old covenant, the arrangement, the agreement between God and man, it was conditioned on obedience. How many of us can keep the law? No way. And by trying to live by our own resources, we put ourselves under the law.

Do you not hear what the law says? It'll smother you. The old covenant was you do your part, God will do His. If you don't do your part, that's it.

But see, the new covenant, it's a new arrangement. The old covenant depended on man. It couldn't produce righteousness or right standing before God, but the new covenant depends on what God can do.

Isn't that awesome? I've been set free because it's God at work. God does and can do. It's called the grace of God.

God blesses man freely. And that's what grace is. And so what this message is in not being sufficient of ourselves, it's God's grace is sufficient.

It's His ability and capability that He wants to lavish upon you. He wants to pour it out in your life so that you can go forth and just have an abundant life. Not just a, you know, how you doing? Oh, I'm making it.

I'm eeking by. No, He wants us to live as more than conquerors, to be triumphant. And it's here by the grace of God, by the sufficiency of God.

God's sufficiency for godly living. Man, we can live godly. It's available.

It's where we depend on the Spirit of God to supply abundant grace, the abundant grace of God, and it leaves us strengthened and encouraged and comforted. Amen. Let's pray.

Father, God of all grace, I humbly admit that I've often held a perspective so different from Yours on the subject of sufficiency. I've, Lord, too often, I repent right now in front of everybody that I've lived the

Christian life as though it depended upon me. And Lord, that's always resulted in deadness.

And so, Lord, I just ask that anybody here that needs to do business with You tonight, that they would open the Scriptures and they would reread this passage and talk to You. Because I know that You have something to say for each of us. That we'd spend time alone with You this evening and we'd do business with You concerning trying to live the Christian life by our own resources.

So thank You for this Word, this simple passage of Scripture that's able to bring us life, to encourage us, to strengthen us, to give us life. And so, Lord, we bless You and we thank You and we love You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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