

Colossians 2:6–15: ⁶Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

⁸See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. ¹¹In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹²having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

The All-Sufficient Christ

I have a question for you gardeners: If you don't think your soil is good enough to grow healthy plants, what do you do? Add fertilizer to your soil, or perhaps more potting soil. You do that so you can be certain that you'll have strong and healthy plants. And if they're fruit of vegetable plants, you fertilize the soil so they will produce more and better fruits and vegetables.

You get a sense from the opening words of our Epistle reading that Paul portrays the Holy Spirit as a gardener who has rooted you in Christ—or a builder who has set you on the foundation of Christ: “Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”

And being so rooted and founded in Christ, to then live that life in Christ by walking in Him. What does that mean? Walking in Christ means to produce daily the fruits—the good works—that come from your faith in Christ; the fruits that mark you as an Christian in this

world; the fruits that give honor to your Lord and Savior. And to walk that life in Christ abounding in thanksgiving.

Knowing what God has done for you in Christ Jesus ought to fill your heart with gratitude—and motivate you to do anything to make God happy.

But what if you thought that being rooted and founded in Jesus aren't enough to be saved—that you needed more than Jesus to receive God's favor. Or, if being rooted and founded in Jesus wasn't enough of a motivation to do the works that God has called you do? Or, that the Gospel wasn't enough to grow the church? Wouldn't you feel the need to add something to Jesus or to His Gospel?

Maybe Jesus didn't do enough to atone for all your sins, so you feel the need to add your own atoning works to the work of Jesus—your good works giving you the boost you need to get to heaven. Or, perhaps the promises of God fulfilled in Christ on the cross and given to you in Baptism aren't enough evidence that you're saved—you need to feel the Holy Spirit as proof of your salvation, so you add a little emotional charge to the Gospel. Or, perhaps you feel like Jesus' forgiveness isn't enough to take away your guilt, so you add a little self-inflicted punishment to help things along; you beat yourself up mentally—or even physically—for being a sinner.

Or, maybe you think the Word of God alone isn't enough to motivate God's people and grow the church—so you add programs to the Word, or turn the Gospel into entertainment to make it more attractive to unbelievers—perhaps that will give the Gospel the fertilizer boost that it needs.

3. The all-sufficiency of Christ because He is fully God and fully Man.

But Paul takes this question of the all-sufficiency of Christ head-on in our text. He writes: “⁸See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.” These empty philosophies and human traditions that Paul refers to all implied that faith in Christ wasn’t sufficient for salvation—you needed more than Jesus. People called Judaizers said you needed to get circumcised and keep the Laws of Moses—in addition to faith in Christ. The Ascetics said that you needed to live a life characterized by abstinence from worldly pleasures—in addition to following Jesus. Then there were the Greek philosophers who said that Christ wasn’t fully human—and that He really didn’t die on the cross for your sins.

But the only way that Jesus wouldn’t be all that you need for salvation is if He isn’t truly the incarnate Son of God. If He wasn’t fully God, there would be no atonement for sin. And if He wasn’t fully human, He couldn’t die for sin. Then His life and death and resurrection wouldn’t be enough—you would have to add more.

But Paul says, “⁹For in [Christ] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.” Jesus is both fully God and fully man. That means that His life, death and resurrection are all that are needed to save humanity from sin and give us life with God. In a nutshell, You don’t need more than Jesus to be saved, to be a child of God, to enter heaven!

You want evidence that you’re saved? Don’t look to your works, because they’re all tainted by sin—and what does God want with sinfully tainted works! And don’t look to your emotions—you can’t trust your feelings, they’re fickle and fleeting—are they not? And don’t look to the wisdom of this world—what is wise in the eyes of the world is foolishness to God.

Look to that which never changes—that which has been sealed by the blood of Jesus—that which endures forever—the promises of God. If God said it, you can count on it!

Listen as Paul demonstrates the all-sufficiency of Christ. Listen how Paul emphasizes how God acts without any help from you! “¹¹In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹²having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”

You want proof that Jesus died for you? Look here, to the crucifix. You want proof that you’re a child of God? Look there, to the baptismal font. You want proof that your sins are forgiven and your guilt taken away? Look to the body and blood of Jesus in His supper. These objective proofs don’t depend on your works or how you feel—they depend on the works and promises of God, fulfilled in Christ.

2. The all-sufficiency of Christ for you in Word and Sacrament.

But how does the Holy Spirit root and build you up in Christ? How does all that God has done for you in Christ Jesus come to you? It comes to you through Word and Sacraments ministry. The Word and Sacraments bring life and immortality to light because they bring Jesus to you. That’s what Word and Sacrament ministry is all about—giving you the gift of life and salvation in Christ.

If you doubt the all-sufficiency of God’s Word to give you life and salvation in Jesus, think about creation. Look at the universe—how did that all come into being? God is almighty—

powerful beyond anything in the universe—and He’s poured His power into His Word. All God had to do was speak—and the universe came into existence.

And God has spoken His Word over you. God has declared you righteous in Christ Jesus through the gift of faith. When the name of God is placed on you in Baptism, you can be certain you are a child of God—because God says so. When God announces that your sins are forgiven, you can be certain He has nailed them to the cross with Jesus, so when God speaks the Absolution, your sins are gone.

When God gives you His Word, He gives you His Holy Spirit—the Lord and giver of life. You don’t get the Holy Spirit because you’ve done good—you don’t get the Holy Spirit because you have the right emotional state of mind—you don’t get the Holy Spirit because you’ve given up your wealth or possessions for Jesus—you get the Holy Spirit because God gives Him through His Word.

And the Holy Spirit uses nothing more than God’s Word and Sacraments to root you and build you up in Christ—and gives you the power to daily walk in Christ.

1. The all-sufficiency of the Gospel for the Church.

But the Holy Spirit also grows the Church. And how does He do that? The same way He roots and builds you up in Christ—through the Word of God and the Sacraments.

The Holy Spirit doesn’t need more than the Gospel to grow the Church, for where the Word of God is proclaimed in its truth and purity, and the Sacraments are administered according to Christ’s institution, there is where you have Christ in His grace saving souls.

The church isn’t just people, warm bodies, gathered in one location—it isn’t a club or an activity center. The Church is the communion of saints—the fellowship of God’s holy ones.

Human beings don't grow the church—we are just blessed to be the instruments the Holy Spirit uses. The Holy Spirit establishes and grows the Church through the Church's faithful confession of who Christ is. Jesus told Peter that He would build His church upon the Rock, and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. That rock was Peter's confession: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt. 16:17–18). In the Book of Acts, Luke teaches us that Christ's disciples devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles, to the fellowship, to the Lord's Supper and to the prayers—worship—and the Lord added to their number—the Holy Spirit grew church (Acts 2:42, 47).

Paul also tells us that the called ministers of God are to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ (Eph 4:11–12). And how is that done? By faithfully teaching the Word of God. Paul told Timothy: "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2Tim 3:16–17).

God has poured His divine power into His Word and Sacraments—nothing more is needed to save souls and grow God's Church.

Where the Holy Spirit chooses to grow the church or not to grow the church isn't really our concern. The call of Christ's disciples is to be faithful to our Savior in Word and Sacrament—in worship and deed—and where and when it pleases the Lord, the Holy Spirit will grow the Church.

Right now, the Holy Spirit is growing the Church in Africa and China—places where God's grace and mercy are received with grateful hearts. In the Middle East, those grateful hearts are willing to die for Jesus—not the formula for growing a business, but the Church isn't a business, it's the spiritual body of Christ, rooted and built up in Him.

THE FAITHFUL CHURCH PROCLAIMS THE ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST, BECAUSE
ALL YOU NEED IS JESUS AND HIS WORD AND SACRAMENTS TO BE FIRMLY
ROOTED IN GOD'S KINGDOM, AND TO GROW AND STRENGTHEN YOUR FAITH,
AND CHRIST'S CHURCH.

In His Name. Amen.