

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

Once again, it is a blessing and joy that we can gather together and start the week right way with the feeding of God's word.

Today, I will be continuing our series on the book of Colossians.

Last week, to maximize your learning, I asked you to read through the book of Colossians, how many of you did so?

Well, if you haven't done so yet, please do take time to read through the entire book of Colossians today.

Let me ask you another question, how many of you have been faithfully reading through the Bible through the **2020 Daily Bible Reading Program**? Remember I gave you this Daily Bible Reading Program on the first Sunday of 2020. Are you all keeping up and checking off the verses you are reading, everyday? Yes?

Well if you haven't, you have a second chance to do so because here in Korea, we have another New Year's Day.
Sollal.

Maybe this Lunar year, you can complete the Bible in one year. Wouldn't that be nice?

A couple of weeks ago, I gave you an introduction to Colossians. And last week, we had a break from my preaching and Pastor Jonathon preached from John, so I know many of us have forgotten much of what I taught you.

My wife also told me after my sermon on Colossians that I used lots of difficult words that were hard to

understand, so she recommended that I clarify these words again.

So just to refresh your memories, let me ask,

Do you remember one of the main themes of Colossians?

Christ is Sufficient

My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Col. 2: 2,3

Above all human wisdom and above all human tradition, Christ stands forth as preeminent over all and sufficient for all. In him “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

Just like I gave you a theme passage for the book of Acts, this passage here perhaps best encapsulates the theme of Colossians.

Christ is sufficient, the Gospel is sufficient, His grace is sufficient. You don't need anything more!

Some of you may recall that I told you when I was in my 20's I went through some depression. I had entered the top school in the world for my major and I was enjoying my education – I liked my professors and I liked my new school friends. I should be happy, right? Well, after the novelty and excitement of attending the top school wore off, I felt empty. Something was missing. I actually felt depressed.

During my schooling, I really mused over my depression. Why am I so depressed? Why can't I be happy? What is the secret to happiness?

Light came to me, not through my schooling or my pursuit of happiness. It came through a weekly Bible study I attended at church. The Bible study was on Colossians. Admittedly, it was not the most exciting Bible study. And admittedly, I was so busy with my studies that, on some weeks, I was tempted to skip Bible study. Many times, I even thought of stopping my attendance of the Bible study. But by God's providence, I faithfully continued attending and after about 3 months of attending the weekly Bible study on Colossians, God gave me an answer that paved a way to slowly overcoming my depression:

Christ is sufficient, the Gospel is sufficient, His grace is sufficient. You don't need anything more!

You see, during my studies, the most important thing I learned while receiving my world-famous, prestigious, yet expensive education was not taught to me at school. No, the most important, most valuable thing I learned came from church.

Knowing that God's grace is sufficient is far more important than anything even the top school, the top professors in the world can teach you.

"we preach Christ crucified ... Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.... For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom." 1 Cor. 1:23-25

You see, I had been a Christian for a long time, but for the first time I came to understand that the supremacy and the sufficiency of Christ – His Gospel – His grace is all-sufficient.

Now two weeks ago, I told you that good exegesis – proper interpretation - is important to Bible study.

- Eisegesis 자의적 주석, 자의적 해석

- εἰς eis, [ice] a preposition meaning “into”

- to read into the text

- pour meaning into the text that’s not there

Example of a person practicing Eisegesis:

“Don’t bother me! I’m looking for a Bible verse to support one of my preconceived notions!”

We don’t want to practice eisegesis, we want to practice exegesis – We want God to speak. We should not read Scripture the way we want to read Scripture.

So -- Context is Key!

- The key to good exegesis is context

"A text without a context is a pretext for a proof text". It is a dangerous thing to take a single text from scripture and make a doctrine from it, especially if that passage has been read out of context.

- Exegesis 성경주석

- to properly explain or interpret Biblical text.

- Correctly handling the word of truth

- Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth – 2 Timothy 2:15

I told that knowing the context is key to exegesis, but ... admittedly, I said there are obstacles to understanding:, and our own biases and presuppositions.

Some of you might complain, “Oh the Bible is so hard to understand. It was written in a foreign language, in foreign culture and in ancient history!”

Despite these obstacles, praise God that the Gospel has been preserved and is available to us.

Praise God that the Gospel is not hidden from us so that the only the well-educated, the wise, the intellectual, or the experienced can grasp it. Nor is it exclusive to only an elite group of people – a group that has attained a lofty level of morality, ethics, or integrity; nor is the Gospel only limited to a certain race or socioeconomic group. No, the Gospel message is available for all types of people - from the religious to the prostitutes, from the rich to the poor, from the powerful to the powerless, and from the Jew to the Gentile, from the adult to the child. People from all walks of life have access to the message of Christ.

So even a young child with no seminary training or training in the Biblical languages can read the Bible and fully understand the basic theme of the Bible – which is the Gospel.

This young child can say, after reading the Gospel in Scriptures, “Yes, Jesus saved me from my sins. He paid for all of my sins through His death on the cross! Jesus did it all. God forgives my sins all because of Jesus. Thank you Jesus!”

The Gospel is simple - at the same time, the Gospel is also deep and profound that a theologian or Bible

scholar can study it for years and still be awe-struck and be blessed by it as they delve deeper.

Everyone can be blessed, by hearing and believing the Gospel.

**“But blessed are your ears because they hear”
(Matt.13:16).**

Now last week, I told you that Paul wrote Colossians in response to a wave of heresies that was infiltrating the young church.

Heresy 이단

- False teaching, usually affecting your salvation – eg. Jehovah Witness 여호와와의 증인) affirm Jesus is not God
- Jesus was not a man like us but only a spirit (Gnosticism 영지주의, 그노시스설, 초기 기독교 시대의 신비철학).
- Salvation by works
- The “Colossian heresy.” (골로새교회 이단)/ proto-Gnosticism (원영지주의)

Paul was concerned because these proto-Gnostics were misleading members of the church away from the Gospel message of Christ.

Colossian Heresy 골로새교회 이/Proto-Gnosticism (원영지주의)

- They are called the “super-apostles.”
- Asceticism (금욕주의, 고행) – denying the flesh – they were anti-body. They taught the created world and the physical human body is evil.

- Claims of special new insight into the powers of darkness, offering special protection.
- *Colossian Heresy* 콜로새교회 이/Proto-Gnosticism (원영지주의)
- New teachers offered new “spiritual freedom” and greater experiences of power above and beyond the Gospel, the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16)
- New teachers offered a “fullness” not previously experienced by early Christians
- They taught that Jesus and the Apostles teachings were insufficient – “we have a fuller teaching.” A NEW teaching! A NEW experience! A NEW way to worship! A NEW thing to do! The Gospel is not enough.

They would say, “Don’t stop at Jesus! There’s more! I have something new, something deeper!”

You see, for the Colossian heretics, the formula was Jesus plus something more.

Unlike the Colossian heretics, we should be *Sola Scriptura* in our beliefs and worship practices.

- Our beliefs, teachings, and worship practices must be historical, and Biblical – never NEW. New teachings and new methods of worship, new traditions have historically always ended up dividing the church. When it comes to Christian beliefs and worship – God hates human creativity. Our inventiveness and creativity fosters and lends itself to cults and heretic beliefs and practices.

Now what do you remember about the Christians in the Colossian church?

Were the Colossians strong Christians or weak Christians?

Yes, they were strong in their faith – they were known for their faithfulness.

In fact, if you remember,

Paul calls them saints/ holy ones.

- From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the saints, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ, at Colossae. (Col. 1:1,2)

What does saint mean?

It means holy one!

What does it mean to be holy?

“Holy” means separated from sin.

If you remember, Rev. 15:4, says,

For you [God] alone are holy. Rev. 15:4

But even though only God is holy, while we are yet sinners, we are forgiven of our sins – once and for all – and declared righteous, holy (that is justified) because of Jesus, because of the Gospel.

God’s declaration of righteousness in the Bible is called

Justification 정의

They had been declared righteous ‘의롭다 함을 선언받는 것’, holy (they were justified) because of Jesus, because of the Gospel.

How does Paul know that they were justified?

The church of Colossae had faith

- Since we heard about your faith in Christ Jesus and the love that you have for all the saints. (Col. 1:4)

What did they have faith in?

Your faith and love have arisen from the hope laid up for you in heaven, which you have heard about in the message of truth, **the gospel** that has come to you.
(Col. 1:5)

Where does faith come from?

- So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Hearing what?

The word of Christ?

And what is the word of Christ?

It's the Gospel.

How does Paul know that their faith is genuine faith in the Gospel?

Their faith in the Gospel produced the fruit of love and good works.

- Just as in the entire world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, so it has also been bearing fruit and growing among you from the first day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth. (Col. 1:6)

Who did they hear and learn this Gospel from?

- You learned the gospel from Epaphras, our dear fellow slave, a faithful minister of Christ.
(Col. 1:7)

Epaphras was called a fellow slave, a faithful minister of Christ. Paul calls him a faithful pastor? Why?

Unlike most contemporary pastors on a given Sunday, Epaphras was faithful in preaching Christ, faithful in ministering the Gospel to the sheep in his church.

What is The Gospel?

The Gospel is Jesus' Life, Death, Burial and Resurrection for the forgiveness of sins for those who believe in Him. 1 Cor. 15

The Gospel is an announcement that Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection in history has achieved our salvation

The church in Colossae believed in Jesus' life, death and resurrection for the forgiveness of their sins and that is why we can call them holy ones and that is why I can also call you holy ones – saints – but only for those who trust in Christ for their salvation.

Nonetheless, we are all sinners:

2 Chronicles 6:38 states, "There is not man which sinneth not."

Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins. Ecclesiastes 7:20

We believers are still sinners practically but positionally in front of a holy, righteous, just God – because of the gift of the Gospel – we Christians are considered holy.

This state of being sinful and at the same time holy is what the Protestant Reformers called simultaneously saint and sinner.

We Christians till the day we die and are resurrected with truly holy, glorified bodies, will be in this present age simultaneously saint and sinner.

In Romans 4:7,8 God's word declares,

"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin." Romans 4:7,8

Who are those whose lawless deeds are forgive, whose sins are covered? Who is the blessed man whom the Lord will not count his sin against him?

The answer: If you believe you are a sinner, but have been declared holy through the blood of Christ, that's you! Praise God!

Now vs. 9 says that they – other churches and Christians – had not ceased praying for the Colossian church.

In the same way, we should be praying without ceasing for our fellow Christian brothers and sisters -- not just for our church, our family and our friends, but for believers all over the world.

Brothers and Sisters, we have a family all over the world. We must love them and pray for them, for they are part of the universal church we belong to.

Did you know that **my students in Kenya** are praying for our church? They have never met you but they love you and they pray for you. Many of you have already seen pictures of them, but do you pray for them? I ask that you return the favor and also pray for the church and the pastors in training at my college in Kenya.

Let us pray for one other and pray also for me, your pastor. We are closer than blood brothers and sisters, for we are all eternal brothers and sisters in Christ.

Now what did they pray for?

They prayed that the church in Colossae “may be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.” Col. 1:9

If we piece, later passages together, we will find that the knowledge and spiritual wisdom and understanding Paul is referring to is Christ – that is the Gospel.

Now how do we behave and act, if we are ones who believe in the Gospel?

Vs. 10 commands believers to “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” Col. 1:10

Because of the Gospel, we must walk in a manner worthy of someone who has received the Gospel – thus our fruit is good works and increasing in the knowledge of God.

These acts of good works and our desire to increase in the knowledge of God is evidence of our faith, fruit!

But The fruit (our good works which flows from the Gospel) is not what saves us. The root – the Gospel (Christ) – is what saves us.

Vs. 12, starts off by giving thanks to the Father.

The giving of thanks follows with a list of reasons:

1) “He has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light” Col. 1:12. (We didn’t earn it – He qualified us in this great inheritance.)

2) “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness” Col. 1:12

Did you know before we came to faith in Jesus Christ, we were once in the dominion of darkness – we were imprisoned in the darkness, that is, blinded of the Good News?

But he delivered us.

And what's more? He has transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Praise God for rescuing us from the dominion of darkness, and redeeming us and forgiving our sins.

His grace is sufficient

- “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. (2 Cor. 12:9)

- 내게 이르시기를 내 은혜가 네게 족하도다 이는 내 능력이 약한데서 온전하여짐이라 하신지라 이러므로 도리어 크게 기뻐함으로 나의 여러 약한 것들에 대하여 자랑하리니 이는 그리스도의 능력으로 내게 머물게 하려함이라 (고린도후서 12:9)

Praise God for His grace is sufficient!

Let us pray!