

OUR SUFFICIENCY

[All quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible]

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God. 2 Corinthians 3:5.

Paul penned these words while in the midst of a discussion about the veracity and relevancy of the ministry which had been given to him by GOD. Paul was not a gifted orator by his own admission (see II Cor. 10:10; 11:6; I Cor.2:1-4) and did not rely upon his own skill and cunning in preaching the unsearchable riches of CHRIST either among those that believed his message or those that did not. He begins this chapter by asking the question, *"Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?" (2 Cor 3:1)* In essence he is saying that he neither sought to please men in his ministry nor did he seek out the commendation of men to render it approved. How different that mindset is from the majority of those who call themselves preachers in our day. Contrast to the prevailing mindset of today, said, *"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." (2Cor.10:12)*

The vast multitude of religious societies and organizations (denominations) exist as mutual admiration societies where a class of men (usually called the clergy) can display their learning, psychological skill, and oratorical gifts, while enjoying the approval (and usually the money) of men, the standard upon which their approval is based is generally in how much formal education they have or which seminary they attend coupled with their ability to hold an audience in rapt attention or produce ever increasing numbers of new members. Confessions of faith are drafted by which the

orthodoxy of each one can be established and a comfort zone is created which defines the limits one is not to transgress and the subjects one is not to discuss. Acceptable standards of practice and certain "orders" of worship are fashioned to further homogenize and regiment these groups so that one can feel comfortable among a people who all speak the company line and know what to expect from one another. Religion is a comfortable place for men to dwell. Paul relied on none of this nor did he seek to establish his ministry, in any way, based upon what men thought or considered proper. *"For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth."* (2 Cor 10:18)

It has been my observation over the years that organized religion usually begins with good intentions, as men seek to establish "safe havens" in this world of sin and sorrow where they can relax and perpetuate a model which they believe to be scriptural and able to be passed from one generation to the other. It is amazing that there is really very little specific instruction in the New Testament concerning how churches are to conduct themselves nor does it appear that such uniformity of action is ever made an issue of great importance from one location to another. However most of the multitude of groups which have arisen over time, each claiming to be "the" new testament church, all (in one way or another) exist primarily to perpetuate their existence as an assembly by establishing an orthodoxy of practice and approved conduct in their midst. We are quite certain that the scripture does teach us how the church on earth is to operate but that teaching is more by way of establishing a principle than a dogma. Those who gather in the name of CHRIST in the earth are to do so according to the rule of being "new creatures" in CHRIST rather than because they conform to a certain orthodoxy. Paul describes those churches which he established in this way, *"Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart."* (2 Cor 3:3)

In saying this Paul did not mean that whatever men feel like doing in the flesh is okay. Rather the contrary is true. Those who accuse us of being "antinomians" seem to have difficulty in comprehending the fact that the SPIRIT of GOD **alone** can teach men what the scripture means or cause them to walk in conformity with it. No amount of "proper" instruction or rote learning of scripture can prepare the heart of a man to walk in spiritual obedience. Hence Paul, GOD *"hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."* (2 Cor 3:6)

If something is "sufficient" then nothing else is required. If one has a sufficiency then they are content and need nothing else to be satisfied. The Greek word that is translated sufficient in the verse before us is the same word John the Baptist used to describe his unworthiness to unloose the sandals of the LORD and the same word used by the centurion when he said he was unworthy for CHRIST to enter his home (see Mat 3:11, Luke 7:6). Apart from the sufficiency (or worthiness) which is supplied by CHRIST alone we have none.

HE is our SUFFICIENCY in the court of heaven. *"Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."* (Rom 5:9-10)

HE is our SUFFICIENCY in the court of our accusers. *"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."* (Rom 8:33-34)

HE is our SUFFICIENCY in the court of man's opinion. *"As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."* (Rom 8:36-37)

HE is our SUFFICIENCY in any ministry to which we are called. *"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."* (2 Cor 4:7)

HE is our SUFFICIENCY in faith. *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."* (Gal 2:20)

HE is our SUFFICIENCY in sanctification. *"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."* (1 Cor 1:30)

HE is our SUFFICIENCY in assurance. *"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."* (2 Tim 1:12)

HE is our SUFFICIENCY in life and death. *"For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."* (Rom 14:7-8)

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