

Last week we wrapped up the section where Paul is addressing the sufficiency of Christ for the task of salvation and redemption by virtue of His deity, His power, His authority, His love, His provision, and His ongoing sustaining work. The focus has been on all that He has done, and continues to do on our behalf. **We looked into Christ's sufficiency, both to save us as well as ensure our continuation in the faith.**

Rom 8:29 *"For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified"*

Eph 1:4 *"He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself"*

John 10:27ff. *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."*

**Yet, this week we shift our focus to a seemingly contradictory truth that gives rise to a couple of questions...**

- What is the relationship between God's sovereign irresistible will and our free will to choose?
- What ensures our salvation and redemption? Our works or God's call

Let's go to our text this morning...

1. Col 1:22ff. "He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach— *if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.*"
  - a. This verse seems to indicate that we have a part in our salvation and sanctification as well. And it is apparent that we do... we see countless warnings and appeals in His word to walk...behave...in keeping with our calling. Just a few:
    - i. Eph 4:1ff *"Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another*

*in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”*

- ii. Col 3:12 *“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.”*
  - iii. Phil 2:12 *“So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling”*
- b. And we know this practically and experientially. We know that we have a choice in how we behave and the admonitions we see in the Word make that clear as well. We experience the tension between yielding to our own will and desires and those of the Spirit of God.
- i. We can be saved and still walk, to some degree, in disobedience.
    - 1. Rom 7:19ff. *“For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. 20 But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. 21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.”*
  - ii. And we can be unsaved and still act, to some degree, in **apparent** obedience to God’s will.
    - 1. Matt 7:21 *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’*
- c. So how does God’s sovereignty... His sovereign call and keeping in our lives... interface with our free will... our ability and responsibility to choose.
- i. Don’t completely know; but we know that both are true. God’s sovereign call is unalterable and irresistible. Yet we are held responsible for our choices. We clearly see in God’s word that the two are not incompatible. They are both fully taught. They are just not fully understandable.

1. This tension between “free will” and God’s sovereignty is addressed in Rom 9-11. In 9:14ff. we read *“What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! 15 For He says to Moses, “I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION.” 16 So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.”*
  - a. Speaks to God’s sovereign choice and election
2. But that leads to the hypothetical question in the next verse; “So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. 19 You will say to me then, *“Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?” 20 On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it? 21 Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?”*
  - a. God does not say “let me explain it to you” He says, basically What makes you think you would understand the answer? And who are you to ask it? Our “comfort level” with that response says much about our spiritual understanding.
  - b. The same thought is found in Is 55:8ff. *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD. 9 “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts. 10 “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; 11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.”*
    - i. Similar response as God’s to Job when Job asks God to explain His actions; *“Where were you...”*
- d. Now, we are called to bear fruit. Undoubtedly. Looking back to Matt 21 we read in vs 17 “So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19

Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 So then, you will know them by their fruits.”

i. But it is important to know that **we do not add to, or ensure our salvation by our works. Rather our works reflect and validate our salvation.**

e. Let’s look back to our text *“He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach— 23 if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven”*

i. This is not fundamentally a call to works, but to continuation in the faith... holding on to the hope of the gospel... making it foundational to all that we do and are.

ii. John makes this clear in 1 John 2:19. *“They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.”*

iii. Jesus illustrates the same truth in the Parable of the Sower (Matt 13)

2. *“Behold, the sower went out to sow; 4 and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. 5 Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. 6 But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. 7 Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. 8 And others fell on the good soil and \*yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. 9 He who has ears, let him hear...*

3. And then we have the explanation in vss 18ff. *“Hear then the parable of the sower. 19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. 20 The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. 22 And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. 23 And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”*

- i. It is those that continue... that bear fruit... that are saved because **true faith results in true fruit.**

So, beloved, what would God have us take away from this passage in Colossians that we have been exploring together over the last couple of months?

- A knowledge of the sacrificial love Jesus demonstrates in His willing death on our behalf
- A knowledge of the wondrous inheritance that is ours in Christ
- A knowledge of the majesty and godliness of the Lord we follow and serve
- An understanding of the need to examine our works... our continuation in faith... not to ensure we are earning our salvation, but as a validation and proof of our salvation.
- A heart that continues... that works... out of an abiding knowledge, love and regard for our Lord

We open on this scene in John 6:66. Jesus has been speaking of His deity and being the only way to salvation... We read these words.

*“As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. 67 So Jesus said to the twelve, “You do not want to go away also, do you?” 68 Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. 69 We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”*

Continuation....

Let us pray