

Meditations on Colossians

by Savannah Gresham

The God who saved me—being the Lord Jesus Christ, firstborn from the dead, the preeminent Son of God who has eternally existed in loving harmony with God the Father and God the Spirit, who took on flesh to live, die, and raise to take away the sins of the world—is sufficient *in and of Himself* to sustain me in faith, sanctify me in holiness, mature me in Christlikeness, and bring me to Himself in heaven in glory. He doesn't depend on anything outside of Himself to do it.

Adding man-made ideologies and methods of spiritual growth to Jesus Christ is unwise (flying in the face of Christ's sufficiency and supremacy) and unfruitful; rather than promoting my spiritual growth, it stagnates it, cuts it off like a kink in a garden hose.

If man-centered ideologies and methods were useless to forgive me of my sins and raise me from the dead, I can count on them to be equally useless to grow me into a mature disciple of Jesus. Only Christ can make me mature in Christ. Only the Spirit of God can make me spiritually mature.

The things that could not rescue me from sin's grip in the past should not be relied upon to set me free from sin's grip in the future.

It's Jesus. It's Jesus alone. Jesus plus nothing at all.

In order to be a fully saved and complete Christian, it is *not*:

- Jesus plus theology books or an apologetics course
- Jesus plus my therapist, my Enneagram or Myers-Briggs type, or my habit of journaling
- Jesus plus the Campus Outreach model of evangelism and discipleship
- Jesus plus the Young Life model of evangelism and discipleship
- Jesus plus the RUF model of evangelism and discipleship
- Jesus plus my favorite non-profit
- Jesus plus my creative pursuits and freedom to express myself
- Jesus plus my job that I love or the salary I desire
- Jesus plus The Gospel Coalition website or the "Ask Pastor John" podcast
- Jesus plus meditation, exercise, and healthy eating
- Jesus plus my specific method of Scripture Memorization
- Jesus plus my media convictions
- Jesus plus baptism, as a baby, or as an adult, or even at all before I die

- Was the thief on the Cross next to Jesus baptized? Was He not promised paradise that very day?
- Jesus plus the Lord's supper taken each week
- Jesus plus the conferences I attend (or don't)
- Jesus plus the hymns I sing (or don't)
- Jesus plus the people I know (or don't)

Surely, Jesus *uses* many of these things to grow me and advance His kingdom... conferences, college ministries, non-profits, podcasts. How kind of Him, how creative, how multi-faceted and infinite in wisdom is He! Isn't it amazing that His hand upon a weak thing makes it strong? Isn't that much like how His breath breathed into a dead person makes them alive?

But all these things are powerless unless He inhabits them, chooses to move in and through them. They're lifeless without His touch, offering no hope for salvation or maturity.

All the things on the other side of the "plus" could be deleted. And what would be left? Jesus. And would He not be enough?

For people who have never heard of John Piper or read *Don't Waste Your Life* Jesus is enough to compel them to pour their lives out for His glory. Jesus convinced many a man and woman - whether illiterate, or timid, or a former-persecutor! - to spend their lives on His glory long before John Piper was conceived, long before He picked up a pen or partnered with a publisher to place his book in the hands of millions.

For people without internet access, Jesus is enough to give them the knowledge they need, for all knowledge and riches of wisdom are hidden in Him. For people who only finished the 3rd grade, Jesus is enough. Remember all the riches of knowledge and wisdom? Are they hidden in the 4th-12th grades? Are they tucked away in the libraries of leading universities? Are they stored up in the lecture halls and impressive minds of top-tier, tenured professors? No, they're hidden in Him. And He gives Himself, all of Himself, to sinners impartially. He unites sinners to Himself without the slightest shred of favoritism, pouring wisdom into the hearts of those who fear Him... into the minds of little children, into the hearts of the humble.

For people with chronic health conditions, the inability to buy healthy groceries, and the inability to exercise... Jesus is enough to grow them spirituality and make them healthy and strong in Him, giving them joy today and new bodies tomorrow.

For people who have never heard of Campus Outreach, RUF, or Young Life, Jesus is enough. He grows them just fine on His own without these ministries. He doesn't need them. They didn't

exist until the past 40-80 years. Hasn't God existed for much longer? And hasn't He always been able to mature His saints without outside help?

For people who don't know what apologetics is, Jesus is enough, and He can teach them how to make a defense for what they believe to be true. He gives us the words we need at the right time.

For people who have severe developmental disabilities and will never be able to learn to meditate, much less read the Bible on their own, or at all, Jesus is enough. He saves, sustains, satisfies, and sanctifies by His own sovereign will, according to His mercy, not our abilities.

For homeless people, Jesus is enough. He makes His home in their hearts; He sends His people, compelled by His Spirit, to meet their material needs; He has prepared a place for them in Heaven. For jobless people, Jesus is enough. Don't we all have a job in the kingdom of God? Doesn't He commission each one of us to participate in His mission? For people who live on a dollar a day, Jesus is enough to meet their needs and give them security and joy. He *fills* us, after all. Despite material hardships and seasons of physical or financial scarcity, no saint lacks anything they truly need for spiritual wholeness and life everlasting.

For enslaved or oppressed people who can't fathom the freedom of self-expression, Jesus, on His own, is utterly enough. They can express themselves freely to Him. When everything else is stripped from them, no one and nothing can snatch them out of the palm of God's hand, or take away from them God's listening ear.

For people whom I might, in my pride, consider "emotionally unhealthy," who have never seen and will never see a therapist, who don't know what the Enneagram is, who don't know the first thing about "boundaries," who can barely recognize what they're feeling, much less why, much less share it with another... Jesus is enough. Didn't He come and live as a man to empathize with us in our humanity and in our weaknesses, yet do so without sin? Doesn't His Spirit (the Spirit of health and healing and wholeness and insight and peace) live within His people? Is His Spirit insufficient? Surely not.

And for people like me, who, materially speaking, have all their needs met, it might not be a college ministry or an ESV Study Bible or access to a Christian podcast that I imagine I need to be a fully saved and complete Christian... because I already have all these things. Someone like me might imagine they need *more* of what they already have: involvement in *all* the college ministries on campus, *more* study Bibles (especially those cute journaling that are trending on Instagram), more podcasts listened to (even at the expense of my time in prayer and in the Word). Not more of Jesus, necessarily... just more of the things I think He needs to grow me.

Or perhaps someone like me is prone to imagine that I need to *serve* more... to be a complete Christian, I need to actively support pro-life ministries *and* ministries like Advance Memphis and Young Lives and Families Matter, because I need to demonstrate to all the world that I'm a womb-to-tomb Christian. I need to volunteer at Su Casa *and* World Relief *and* REP, in order to reach the ultra-Christian level of loving immigrants and refugees... not just Americans.

Perhaps I feel that my kids need to go to the same school that all my Christian parent friends send their kids... perhaps I tell myself this is for their Christian formation, but, deep down, even though I'm not convinced this school is the best fit for my particular children and my particular family, I just can't handle the thought of my friends thinking I'm a less-than mom.

Or maybe I imagine that I need to get it perfectly right on every theological issue I ever come across... I preach the gospel to others, but, when it comes to me, I don't believe God would accept me, or ever say something like, "well done, my good and faithful servant," if one of my theological convictions proved to be wrong.

No, Jesus is enough! How freeing is that! If my access is barred to all the things on the other side of the plus sign, no matter! I need not panic or despair or settle for second-rate spiritual growth, for a less-than-satisfying spiritual walk, for the hand-me-downs of holiness given to me in pity by those that are privileged enough to *truly* have all they need... no, Jesus is enough. He always has been. He is today. He will always be. If I have Him, I have all I need.

So, will I trust Him today? Will I stop my vain striving after manmade, man-centered, Jesus-marginalizing ideologies, philosophies, methods, & practices that steal some, much, or all of my confidence away from the only One who deserves it, the only One who has earned it? Will I believe that if Jesus gave me *birth*, He will surely give me *growth*, too? If Jesus was the One who gave me new life, won't He be the One that grows me in it?

Will I resolve to look not elsewhere, to "turn my eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face," seeing Him for who He was yesterday, who He is today, and who He will be tomorrow and forever: supreme, sufficient, and set on setting me free, making me holy, whole, and beautifully like Him... one little, eternal, glorious degree at a time.