

THE QUESTION OF SUFFICIENCY

If I have the picture right, the question of sufficiency will become more and more significant as the time of Jesus' return draws near. The challenges we face often bring this whole idea of sufficiency into the center of our experience. Many of us have been trained to think on our own, to rely on ourselves, and to have some self-confidence. But often, when difficulties and challenges confront us, all of this training vanishes and takes with it all our resolve. So the question of sufficiency becomes exceedingly relevant.

As the apostle Paul contemplated the role of those who follow Jesus in His grand, eternal procession, he asked the question, "Who is equal to such a task?" (2 Corinthians 2:16). There are many answers to this question. However, Paul himself, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, answers his own question with great clarity: "The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He

is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross” (Colossians 1:15–20; see also John 3:31–36; Hebrews 1:1–3).

There is only one answer to Paul’s question, and the name of that answer is *Jesus*! He is the “All-Sufficient” One—the One of whom Paul says, “My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). And in one of the most precious passages found in the Bible, Paul asks another question and then answers it: “If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him [that is, with Jesus] graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:31, 32).

Dear reader, as you journey through the pages of this little book, I will be praying that you will discover that Jesus can meet you right where you are today and take care of your pressing needs. “Christ walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks. . . . He is represented as walking, which signified untiring wakefulness, unremitting vigilance. He observes whether the light of any of his sentinels is burning dim or going out. If the candlesticks were left to mere human care, the flickering flame would languish and die. But he is the true watchman in the Lord’s house, the true warden of the

temple courts. His continued watchcare and sustaining grace are the source of life and light.”¹

Endnote

1. Ellen G. White, *The Home Missionary*, November 1, 1893.

How Much Is Enough?

Many years ago, my best friend, Lee, and I rode a Greyhound bus across two Canadian provinces in order to experience the Pacific National Exhibition in Vancouver, British Columbia. We had no particular agenda in mind; we just thought that going there was a good idea. Lee had enough money for bus fare for both of us, but little more than that, and no hotel reservations. We hadn't planned things very well at all.

Like intrepid adventurers, we set out for the exhibition early one morning, believing that a friend of ours was almost certainly working there and that he would invite us to his home for a few days. Our ambitious thoughts didn't take into account the fact that he had a mother who most likely would want to have some say regarding the invitation we assumed he would extend to us.

We spent our first night in Vancouver sleeping in newspaper bins behind the Greyhound bus terminal. However, much to our delight, the invitation did come, and we spent the next couple of nights experiencing the graciousness and generosity of those people and the comfort of their home.

On our first morning there, we were treated to a wonderful breakfast of pancakes and eggs, hot cereal, and juice. Nothing could have been better than that! Then, as we approached the end of the meal, the hostess asked, “Have you boys had enough? Would you like more?”

One would have to know a little bit of the life story of my friend Lee in order to understand what happened next. Lee had left his home while still in his teens and had found work in the oil fields of northern Alberta. He often spent his paychecks at the local bar, and frequently wound up making do for food. At times he would get so hungry that he would go into a restaurant, ask for a cup of hot water, and then pour ketchup into the cup and drink his version of tomato soup.

In other words, in those days, Lee had a healthy appetite. He was also modest, so the experience of having a full belly and being asked if he wanted more was somewhat perplexing for him. He answered with all the dignity that a seventeen-year-old could muster, “No, thank you, I have had sufficient.” It was a proper retort, but unusual because of its formality, so all the young people at the table burst into laughter, and ever after “I have had sufficient” was our way of poking at one another when we thought something was being overstated.

When have you “had sufficient”? What is it that satisfies you?

Mark Zuckerberg, the cofounder and CEO of Facebook, had amassed twenty-seven billion dollars by his twenty-seventh birthday. That’s a huge amount of money. Is it enough for him? Is twenty-seven billion dollars sufficient?

The question of sufficiency raises a wide variety of answers because the answers depend in part on where you live and

what you're doing when the question is asked. The starving and impoverished in our world and those living in the ghettos of our cities have very different answers to these questions than do the people who live in suburban North America. And the answers are changing even within these smaller groups.

There is, however, one aspect of life in which the question of sufficiency—of what is enough—is universal. In the matter of salvation, all men and women walk on level ground. Do we humans have sufficient spiritual depth and character to deserve God's favor? Just how much is enough? And if we don't have enough, how can we get what we lack?

For me, the question then becomes, Is Jesus enough? Are His life, death, and resurrection sufficient to bring me into harmony and eternal friendship with God? Is Jesus' work of mediation for me today sufficient to enable me to face my challenges today—right now?

God Himself answers this question through the words of the apostle Paul. "He [Jesus] is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them" (Hebrews 7:25). In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, he reminds us of the all-sufficiency of God's plan by reflecting to us the words of assurance that God Himself spoke to him: " 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness' " (2 Corinthians 12:9). In the rest of this verse, Paul tells us his response to God's assurance of His sufficiency: "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."

There is a wonderful comment on this in an article that Ellen White wrote that was published in the May 6, 1902,

issue of the *Review and Herald*: “When the attention is fastened on the cross of Christ, the whole being is ennobled. The knowledge of the Saviour’s love subdues the soul, and lifts the mind above the things of time and sense. Let us learn to estimate all temporal things in the light that shines from the cross. Let us strive to fathom the depths of humiliation to which our Saviour descended in order to make man the possessor of eternal riches. As we study the plan of redemption, the heart will feel the throb of the Saviour’s love, and will be ravished by the charms of his character.”

The following chapters attempt to reveal the fact that Jesus is sufficient—sufficient not only to take us to heaven at the end of this world, but also to help us today. As we see Him every day, we discover that He is “a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24).

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What’s your favorite food? How much of it does it take to make you feel you’ve had “sufficient”? How do you know when you’ve had “sufficient”?
2. What has Jesus supplied for our salvation? Is what He has supplied all that’s necessary for our salvation, or must we provide something too? If so, what would that be?
3. Ellen White wrote that when our attention is fastened on the cross of Christ, our whole being is ennobled. Why does focusing on the cross ennoble us? Earning our living and caring for the people important to us demands much of our time and energy. How then can we maintain the focus Ellen White called for?