

El Shaddai — He Is Sufficient

A Ministry in the Word

Scripture Reading — Genesis 17:1

And Abram was ninety-nine years old, and Jehovah appeared to Abram, and said to him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be perfect.

Man Is Not Enough

There is a form of counsel that the world offers to those who are nervous and unsure of themselves — advice that is meant to be helpful but contains at its heart one of the oldest lies. The words are: *you are enough*. Well-meant, no doubt. But the Scripture says otherwise, and says it plainly, in passage after passage.

All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). The mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, for neither indeed can it be (Romans 8:7). The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14). Flesh and blood cannot inherit God's kingdom, nor does corruption inherit incorruptibility (1 Corinthians 15:50). That is the witness of Scripture about man as he is. He is not enough. He is not sufficient. No sinner stands before God with anything of his own that meets what God requires.

The Answer — a Work of Another

The Lord's word to Nicodemus does not say, I am sorry, you are just not enough. It opens a door: *except anyone be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3).* And when Nicodemus asks how — can a man enter a second time

into his mother's womb? — the Lord speaks of being born of water and of Spirit. Nicodemus could not do that. It was not his doing at all. The Lord was pointing to the work of another. Not man being enough, but God acting where man could not.

And Peter, writing to believers, reminds them of the same: *knowing that ye have been redeemed, not by corruptible things as silver and gold... but by precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, the blood of Christ* (1 Peter 1:18). They had been redeemed. They were not sufficient in themselves — else there would have been no need of redemption. Else there would have been no need for the Son of God to come to this earth, to enter into death, to have that spear thrust into His side to draw forth the blood that saves. The emblems on the table remind us of that. It was entirely the work of another.

The Names of God — Elohim, Jehovah, Shaddai

Three names of God appear in the opening chapters of Genesis, and each carries a distinct significance.

In Genesis 1:26, the name is Elohim — God in the absolute. The Hebrew is plural — not dual but plural, three or more — and the verse reflects that: *let us make man in our image, after our likeness*. Right at the creation of man, the Trinity is before us in that plural. It was the Son who was the acting Creator — *by whom also He made the worlds* (Hebrews 1:2).

In Genesis 2:7, the name changes: Jehovah Elohim. Jehovah is the name of God in covenant relationship with man on earth — the name of relationship, found throughout the Old Testament. By bringing in Jehovah with Elohim in the formation of man, the Scripture tells us that the God who created intended to have a personal relationship with what He had made.

And in Genesis 17:1, Jehovah appears to Abram and says: *I am the Almighty God* — in Hebrew, El Shaddai. Darby's footnote notes the name. Shaddai carries the thought of omnipotence, but its deeper force is *sufficiency*. He is the All-sufficient One. There is nothing He cannot do for us. Everything we need, He is sufficient for it. Man is not enough — but El Shaddai is.

My Grace Suffices Thee — Paul's Thorn

The Apostle Paul had a physical trait — the Spirit of God has not told us what it was — that he feared might hinder his ministry. He asked the Lord three times to take it away. Was it too hard for the Lord? Nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37). The Lord who made Sarah fruitful past all natural hope, who gave Elizabeth a son in her old age, who is El Shaddai — He was certainly sufficient to remove that thing.

But the Lord's answer was not that He lacked the power. His answer was: *my grace suffices thee; for my power is perfected in weakness* (2 Corinthians 12:9). The thorn remained because the Lord had given it to keep the apostle from being exalted — for this was a man who had been caught up into the third heaven. It was the Lord's will, not the Lord's limitation. And knowing that, the same apostle could write from prison: *my God shall abundantly supply all your need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus* (Philippians 4:19). The thorn was still there. His confidence in the sufficiency of God was total.

Not Appearing Before Him Empty — Deuteronomy 16:16

In Deuteronomy 16:16, the Lord gave Israel a standing instruction about the three great feasts — unleavened bread, weeks, and tabernacles: *they shall not appear before Jehovah empty*.

Those feasts were all given to bring glory to the Lord. Each had a moral meaning that pointed to Him. And the people were not to come to them empty-handed. How much more ought we, who know that the Spirit of God takes the things of Christ and shows them to us (John 16:15), not to appear before the Lord empty. If we are not being filled with His presence in our private life, we will not be filled with His presence when we gather. Even a small study of the names of God — El Shaddai, the All-sufficient One — can fill the soul, so that we do not come to His table or to His assembly empty.

It Is Enough — Bethany

There is a hymn that sums this up: *Jesus, thou art enough, the mind and heart to fill, thy patient life to calm the soul, thy love its fear to still.*

At Bethany, six days before the Passover, the Lord was at supper. Martha served — that was her gift, and she brought it. Lazarus sat at the table with Him — the man the Lord had raised from the dead simply wanted to be in His presence, and he was not in the other room. He sat at the table with Him. He was not empty.

And Mary took a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair. She took the low place before Him. It was costly to her — she had worked and saved to have it. *And the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.* That is what happens when we do not appear before Him empty. The fragrance ascends. And it is very precious to the Father.

The Lord said in Matthew 10:25: *it is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his Lord.* Man in himself is not enough. But the Holy Spirit who dwells in every believer takes the things of Christ and shows them to us — and as we are filled with Him, we are as our Master. That is the connection. Not of ourselves. By the Spirit of God, who is given to us.

— *Study ends* —