

July 28, 2019

## The Centrality of Scripture

2 Timothy 3:14-17

### Part 3

*In the Bible God has revealed everything we need for salvation and godly living. There is no reason to look elsewhere.*

LTS: 2 Pet. 1:1-11

Matt 5:17-18; 26:54; Luke 16:17

I think we can all agree that one of the marks of a true Christian is that he/she loves the Bible. Indeed, it is often true that the most dramatic change that spontaneously occurs in a man or woman when they first embrace Christ as their Savior and Lord is that they suddenly find within them a hunger and thirst for God's word. From the time of conversion to the end of their lives they live under a new banner, namely; Sola Scriptura – Scripture Alone. That is, we are concinved that

- Scripture alone can create faith in a sinner
- Scripture alone is the means of knowing God
- Scripture alone is the authority over Christian faith and practice And Scripture alone provides all the truth necessary to build a life that pleases the Lord.

As a church, we love the Scriptures. We love the Bible. In 1994 when we revitalized this church, we officially changed the name to Bible Church because we wanted everyone to know that our life and ministry would be rooted in the Bible. We didn't merely want to be another church in the community. We wanted to be a church whose core and foundation is the Bible. We were determined to be a church that encouraged all believers to embrace the centrality of Scripture to the glory of God and their own stability and joy. But we never thought for a minute that this was a novel idea. Rather, we saw ourselves following the ancient directives that God had laid down in His Word.

There is, perhaps, nowhere in the Bible that lays out a stronger case for the centrality of Scripture than Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to Timothy. So, if you have a bible with you, I invite you to turn with me to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter of 2 Timothy.

Read 2 Tim. 3:14-17

Our goal this morning is to talk about the sufficiency of Scripture. In recent weeks we learned about Scripture's authority – that because its source is the very breath of God, it is inherently authoritative. By virtue of his deity, God has the right to command our obedience and trust, and he does so through His word. Also, since the word of God come from God who cannot lie, it is right to conclude that the Scriptures are also infallible in their original autographs and should therefore be believed and trusted. So, we believe in the Authority of Scripture.

Second, we learned that the Scriptures are Efficacious. That is, the words of God are living and active. They are given to accomplish things in the world and in our lives and they never return to God void. They are powerful to accomplish God's purposes. Hence, Paul says (3:16) that the Scriptures are uniquely "profitable for teaching, reproving, correcting, and for training in righteousness."

The implication is that if we are going to effectively make disciples, we need to engage in these four disciplines as each are needed. And as we do, we can have confidence that by the ministry of the word of God, the "man of God will be equipped for every good work." So, we believe in the Efficacy of Scripture.

What a marvelous gift the word of God is to His church! And yet, there's more! The Scriptures are authoritative, they are efficacious, and finally, the Scriptures are Sufficient. At Calvary Bible Church we believe in the Sufficiency of Scripture.

Now, since there are NOT a lot of words in the text to build this sermon on this morning, I want to offer some hooks to hang our thoughts upon so you can follow along more easily, OK? I want to talk to you about...

## I. The Definition of Sufficiency

## II. The Biblical Grounds for Sufficiency

### III. Some Applications of Sufficiency

Let's begin with the

#### I. The Definition of Sufficiency

1. When theologians speak of the Sufficiency of Scripture, they mean that “Scripture contains all the divine words necessary for any aspect of human life.”<sup>1</sup>
2. What does this mean exactly? John Frame in his excellent Systematic Theology explains, “Scripture contains divine words sufficient for all of life. It has all the divine words that the plumber needs, and all the divine words that the theologian needs”<sup>2</sup>
3. Now that may sound a bit strange at first because when we talk theology our first instinct is NOT to think of plumbers. But this definition doesn't suggest that the Word of God contains some kind of technical manual for plumbers to enable them to master their craft. Rather, it means (listen carefully) that a plumber has in the Bible all of God's words that are necessary for him to be a plumber for the glory of God. Just as the theologian (or pastor) finds in the bible all of God's words necessary for him to be a spiritual shepherd for the glory of God. The Bible tells people everything necessary to be reconciled to God and everything necessary to live for the glory of God.
3. In the 1600's the pastors and theologians of Westminster, England, wrestled with formulating a brief explanation of the Doctrine of Sufficiency and this is what they came up with (I had it printed in your bulletin):

The Westminster Confession declares that:

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.” (WCF 1.6)

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<sup>1</sup> John Frame, *Systematic Theology*

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

That is to say, everything God wants us to know about salvation and life as a follower of Christ can be found in the Bible. That's what we mean when we say the Scriptures are sufficient.

## II. The Biblical Grounds for Sufficiency.

1. Notice (16) Paul says, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and "profitable." This means that the Scriptures are beneficial or useful. In other words, the Scriptures should be used whenever we attempt to teach, reprove, correct, or train people to live righteously. More specifically to the context, Paul's concern is that as the church trains men and women to lead (either as pastors, evangelists, counselors or disciplers, deacons, small group leaders or whatever respectively), the Scriptures should be the curriculum. It is the believer's comprehensive source of truth.
2. Second, notice that all four of these words refer mostly to verbal ministry. Teaching is verbal activity. Reproving is usually done by a verbal encounter. Correcting usually takes place through the means of words. And while training in righteousness often involves modeling, it will usually also necessitate verbal instruction. Therefore, Paul is saying, in your verbal ministry, or in your discipleship conversations, or teaching, or preaching, the word of God should be used. But don't misunderstand. He's NOT saying the Bible is one of many good options.
3. Notice that the ministry of God's word is comprehensive. By the Scriptures (17), "the man of God complete, equipped.
  - A. The terms "Complete" and Equipped together forms the combination of an adjective and a perfect passive participle and may be best translated as Thoroughly equipped, or able to meet all demands.<sup>3</sup>
  - B. And if that were not enough, Paul inserts the word "Every." The Scriptures meet all the necessary demands to prepare equip for Every good work. It prepares or equips people for all sorts, and every kind of good work.
  - C. All of these terms have a comprehensive complexion about them. Paul wants Timothy to know that the core of his ministry is to Teach,

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<sup>3</sup> Frank Gaebelein, *The Expositors Bible Commentary vol 11*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1981), 410

**Reprove, Correct, and Train people using God's all-sufficient word.**

4. In the Scriptures we find every command, every promise, every doctrine, every warning, every kind of wisdom and all truth necessary to

- A. effectively equip the saints for ministry,
- B. to address their personal problems (whether they be relational problems such as in marriage, or soul problems such as depression, eating disorders, panic attacks, various addictions)
- C. Or to help them repent from sin,
- D. Or to show them how to worship in Spirit and truth
- E. and to perform every other "good work" that would be pleasing to the Lord. The word of God - the Scriptures - are sufficient for all these things.

5. The application, then, is obvious: In everything God calls you to do, rely upon His word. "Do not lean on your own understanding" (Prov. 3:5-6). Consult God's word. Obey the Scriptures. Minister His word. Meditate on the bible. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." Let the word of God be central in your marriage, your parenting, the way you relate to coworkers, neighbors, enemies and friends. Let all your life and ministry be ruled by the word of God. Why, because the Scriptures alone are sufficient to inform and train you to do all EVERYTHING God wants you to do in a manner that pleases Him.

6. And by the way, these are NOT the only verses in this context that point to the sufficiency of Scripture. Look back at vs. 14-15

Read 2 Tim. 3:14-15

7. Paul says here that the Scriptures make us "wise for salvation." When we think of "salvation" we tend to think merely of the specific work of regeneration that the H.S. grants by grace through faith. We think of it as a singular moment in time when we were born again to a living hope (as Peter describes it). But salvation is not merely about what happened to you in the moment you first believed. Salvation is an immense and magnificent work of Christ that only begins the moment we believe. Now listen carefully: When Christ redeems us, he begins the process of changing us.

And as he progressively transforms us into the likeness of Christ, he “saves” us from many pernicious problems.

8. For example,

- A. will there be unreconciled relationship in heaven? No.
- B. Will children rebel against their parents in heaven? No.
- C. Will there be depression in heaven? Not a chance!
- D. Will there be eating disorders, or church splits, or panic attacks, or enslavement to besetting sin? May it never be!
- E. Why? Because all these problems (and thousands of others like them) will be finally eradicated by the precious blood of Jesus and the power of his Spirit. This, too, is part of God’s great salvation.

9. Think about it my Christian friend. Your salvation is perfect, but this side of heaven it is always incomplete. Through the blood and righteousness of Jesus your sins have been perfectly forgiven and you are counted as perfectly righteous in Christ. But God intends for you to have MORE! The completion of your salvation will come when you see Jesus face to face and all your tears will be wiped away forever, and your warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil will finally end in victory. But that doesn’t mean we have to wait until heaven to begin experiencing practical salvation.

10. Listen to me: Jesus is committed to changing you NOW! His H.S. is making all circumstances “work together for good” so that you will progressively conform to the likeness of Christ (Rom. 8:28-29). Perhaps that’s why Paul mentions to Timothy that there must be (listen to this phrase) “Training in Righteousness (3:16).

11. Today – this very day – you can grow. You can mature. You can become a more like Jesus. You can move a little closer to what you will finally be in heaven. But here’s the thing: That will NOT happen apart from the Scriptures. The Bible is critical and necessary to bring about this good work.

12. Think about it:

- A. “The Scriptures impart instruction (that’s teaching).

- B. The Bible makes us aware of our problems (that's reproof).
  - C. The word of God us profitable for pointing in the direction of positive change (that's correction).<sup>4</sup>
  - D. And the Scriptures train us how to progressively grow in the likeness of Christ (that training for righteousness).
13. And as our sanctification progresses, we increasingly taste and enjoy the practical benefits in our relationships, our emotions, our purity and holiness, our freedom in Christ. We begin to become progressively more of what we will be in heaven. This too is on Paul's mind when he tells us that the Scriptures make us wise for salvation. The Scriptures are sufficient NOT only to save us, but to sanctify us in every way.
14. Now, there is one more text we should consider briefly. This doctrine Scripture's sufficiency is evident NOT only in the writings of Paul, but in Peter's contribution to the canon as well.
- Turn with me for a moment to 2 Peter chapter 1.
- Read 2 Peter. 1:2-4
15. The sufficiency of Scripture teaches us that God has not left his people lacking in any sense. In this passage the apostle Peter states this emphatically. Note the phrase all things (i.e. Everything). God has provided absolutely everything man needs for physical and spiritual life.
16. Ed Buckley argues that, "If Peter is correct [about this], then God has given us all the information we need to function successfully in this life. Every essential truth, every essential principle. Every essential technique for solving human problems has been delivered in God's Word."<sup>5</sup>
17. Now let's be clear on this point. Peter is NOT teaching us that Christians have access to everything there is to know about everything but that we have access to everything necessary to live every moment in a manner that glorifies God.

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<sup>4</sup> Stuart Scott and Heath Lambert, *Counseling The Hard Cases*, (Nashville, B&H Academic, 2012), 11-12

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 12-13

18. Some have pointed out that this passage does not explicitly identify Scripture as the source of all things needed. Rather, it points to Christ as the source. The text says Christ's divine power has granted to us everything for life and godliness. And of course, this is correct. But how do Christian access His divine power for living. "Peter explains that this power comes through the knowledge of Christ manifested in his "precious and magnificent promises."

19. As Heath Lambert explains, "The word Scripture is not used here, but no faithful Christian interpretation of Peter's words could conclude that a person has access to this knowledge of Jesus Christ and his promises apart from Scripture"<sup>6</sup> through the promises of God.

These are the key text for the Sufficiency of Scripture.

### III. Applications of Sufficiency

1. Christians do NOT need to lean on subjective impressions or someone who claims to have the gift of prophesy to discern God's will for our lives. Everything we need to know about discerning God's will is sufficiently revealed in the Bible.
2. Christians do Not need to be unsure about how to please God with their lives. The doctrine of Sufficiency gives us confidence that we will be able to find what God requires us to think or to do for [hundreds of moral and doctrinal] questions."<sup>7</sup>
3. When a believer is asked to counsel someone with a difficult concern, he/she can be sure that the Bible is comprehensively sufficient as a guide for the discipline of counseling. ... [The Bible] is comprehensively sufficient for understanding those aspects of human nature and those processes of change that are essential for wise and effective counseling.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 15

<sup>7</sup> Wayne Grudem, 129

<sup>8</sup> Powlison, "Critiquing the Modern Integrationists," Journal of Biblical Counseling XI (1993): 28-29

#### 4. Other...

In the Bible God has revealed everything we need for salvation and godly living. There is no reason to look elsewhere. In other words, the Scriptures are sufficient.