

## The Doctrine of the Word of God: NECESSITY

Recall the five characteristics of Scripture:

1. Authority
2. Inerrancy
3. Clarity
- 4. Necessity**
5. Sufficiency

The WCF deals with the necessity of Scripture in its very first statement, 1.1:

Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of His will, which is necessary unto salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal Himself, and to declare that His will unto His church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing: which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people now being ceased.

The confession here establishes the necessity of Scripture based on the insufficiency of other forms of revelation to give the knowledge of salvation.<sup>1</sup>

- This is because to be saved, one must be enter into a saving, covenantal relationship with the true and living God, Yahweh.

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<sup>1</sup> As we will see later, God indeed can be “known” through His creation and our God-given consciences. However, this is not a *saving* knowledge of God, as Paul makes abundantly clear in Romans 1-2. It is knowledge sufficient only to condemn them for rejecting Him. For one to be saved, they must believe in God's gospel (see Rom. 1:16 in light of 1:1-4).

- This is why many scholars affirm that the Scriptures God has given us are a covenant document between Him and His people.

Recall that a covenant is a relationship two parties enter into. In the Bible this relationship is between the Lord Yahweh and His servants/vassals, characterized by the Lord's control, authority, and presence.

- In this relationship, the Lord speaks to His vassals, *defining* the terms and stipulations of the covenant relationship.

Thus, without Yahweh's words, there can be no covenant authority.

- Before the Bible was written down (i.e. pre-Moses), God revealed Himself to His people and spoke in and by dreams, visions, and theophanies.
  - As redemptive history progressed, God revealed Himself to His people (now called "Israel") through the words of Moses, most notably the covenant document called "the ten words" (i.e. ten commandments).
    - ➔ See Exo. 34:28; cf. Deut. 4:13; 2 Chr. 34:31
  - The ark housed this covenant document, also called "the testimony/witness."
    - ➔ The ark symbolized Yahweh's throne. His covenantal rule over His people is summarized succinctly in this Decalogue.
  - Thus, when the Israelites fail to keep God's words, they "break My covenant" (Lev. 26:15).
    - ➔ No written covenant document means no covenant, and thus no possibility of a [saving] covenantal relationship.
- Similarly, Jesus says that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments (John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:7, 10; cf. 1 John 2:3; 5:3; 2 John 6, etc.).
  - If we do not do as Jesus says, we may not call Him our "Lord" (Matt. 7:21-27; cf. Luke 6:46).

➔ Though Jesus wrote no books, we must trust the writings of His apostles and disciples to mediate our covenantal relationship with Him (see John 16:13; Eph. 2:20).

People often claim to have a personal relationship to Christ, though they disregard His words. But the relationship that Christ has established with His people is a covenant relationship, and therefore a verbal relationship.

- So, if we are to have a covenantal relationship with Jesus, we must acknowledge Scripture as His Word.
    - In the words of Frame: “No Scripture, no Lord. No Scripture, no Christ. No Scripture, no salvation.”<sup>2</sup>
- ➔ Rom. 10:17 (HCSB): “So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.”

Not only is Scripture necessary to give the knowledge of salvation, it is **also necessary to maintain our spiritual lives**.

- Matt. 4:4 (NASB): “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”
- 1 Pet. 2:2 (NLT): “Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation.”
  - Our spiritual life is thus maintained by daily nourishment with the Word of God.

Subsequently, **the Bible is necessary for certain knowledge of God’s will**.

- Though God has not revealed all things to us, He has revealed enough for us to know His will: “The secret things belong to the LORD our God; but the things are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29).

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<sup>2</sup> John Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 615.

- As it was in the time of Moses, so it is with us now: God has revealed His words to us that we might obey His laws *and thereby* do His will.

→ Cf. Psa. 1; 25:4-5, 8-10, 14; 119:1-4, etc.<sup>3</sup>

- To keep God’s law is to love Him as our [covenantal] Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:37-40, etc.).

- The Scriptures show us *precisely* what it looks like to love the Lord our God, and our neighbors as ourselves.

→ E.g. 1 John 5:1-3 must be read in light of the rest of the book (as well as the Old and New Testaments [properly interpreted, of course]).

In the words of Grudem: “If we are to have a certain knowledge of God’s will, then, we must attain it through the study of Scripture.”<sup>4</sup>

So, where do we go to learn the things God has revealed?

- Do we look to the trees? What about inner light? How about community standards? Maybe human reason and experience?
- The testimony of Scripture is that only God can tell us about God, and that He has done so by “breathing out” (2 Tim. 3:16; cf. 2 Pet. 1:21) His words to His church in the final form of the Bibles we hold in our hands.

We close with the practical words of Kevin DeYoung:

If the Bible is [necessary], then why wouldn’t we read it, study it, memorize it, and teach it to others? Why would we build our churches on the shallow soil of pragmatic philosophy? Why would we counsel with the leftovers of worldly wisdom? Why would we look first to the

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<sup>3</sup> Here, it is helpful for us as new covenant believers that the word translated as “law” does not always nor necessarily mean “Law of Moses.” The word, *torah* (תּוֹרָה), literally means “teaching,” and thus can easily be interpreted in light of our fuller revelation (“teaching”) in Christ (cf. Heb. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:20). Therefore, it is not wrong, but entirely right, to understand passages such as Psa. 119:18 in light of the coming of Christ and His gospel.

<sup>4</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 119.

beauty of the mountains or to the echo chamber of the self in our moments of deepest pain and crisis? Why would we infuse our worship services with so little Scripture? Why would we sing songs bereft of biblical substance? Why would we prostrate the Word of God to even the smartest-sounding words of men?<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> DeYoung, *Taking God at His Word*, 93.