

The Sufficiency of Scripture

SUFFICIENCY: Scripture is sufficient in that it is the only **inspired, inerrant**, and therefore **final authority** for Christians for faith and godliness, **with All Other Authorities being subservient to Scripture.**

* The Reformation principle of *Sola Scriptura* has to do with the **Sufficiency of Scripture as our Supreme Authority in ALL Spiritual Matters.**

* *Sola Scriptura* simply means that all truth necessary for our salvation and spiritual life is taught either explicitly or implicitly in Scripture.

* It is NOT a claim that all truth of every kind is found in Scripture.

* This or that "scientific truth" may or may not be actually true, whether or not it can be supported by Scripture -- but Scripture is a "more sure Word," standing above all other truth in its authority and certainty.

* Scripture therefore is the highest & supreme authority on any matter to which it speaks.

* 2 Peter 1:19¹⁹ *And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, **which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts***

* But there are many important questions on which Scripture is silent.

* *Sola Scriptura* makes no claim to the contrary.

* It only means that everything necessary, everything binding on our consciences, and everything God requires of us is given to us in Scripture.

* As stated in previous weeks, we are forbidden to add to or take away from Scripture

* Deut 4:2² *You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.*

* Deut 12:32³² *“Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.*

* Prov 30:5-6⁵ *Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.*⁶ *Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.*

* Rev 22:18-19¹⁸ *For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book*

* To do so is to lay on people's shoulders a burden hard to bear that God does not intend.

* Matt 23:4⁴ *For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.*

* **Scripture is the perfect and only standard of spiritual truth, infallibly revealing all that we must believe in order to be saved, and all that we must do in order to glorify God.**

* The 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith defines the Sufficiency of Scripture: "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" (1:6).

* Gal. 1:8-9⁸ *But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.*⁹ *As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.*

* 2 Thess. 2:2² *not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.*

* The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church include this statement on *Sola Scriptura*: "The Holy Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation" (article 6).

* The fact that Jesus did and taught many things not recorded in Scripture is wholly irrelevant to the principle of *Sola Scriptura*.

* John 20:30; 21:25³⁰ *And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book ...*²⁵ *And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.*

* What is certain is that **all that is necessary is in Scripture** -- and we are forbidden "to exceed what is written"

* 1 Cor 4:6⁶ *Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.*

* Scripture clearly claims for itself this sufficiency - Nowhere more clearly than 2 Tim 3:15-17.

* A brief summary of that passage

* Vs 15: Affirms that **Scripture is Sufficient for Salvation**: "*The sacred writings... are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*"

* Vs 16: Affirms **the Absolute Authority of Scripture**, which is "God-breathed" (Gk. *theopneustos*) and profitable for our instruction

* Vs 17: States that **Scripture is Able to Equip the Man of God** "*for every good work.*"

* Paul speaking to Timothy, gives him every confidence that the Scriptures he has inherited are not only divine in their origin but sufficient for the ministry entrusted to him.

* Scripture's Sufficiency gives us reason for gratitude because God has not only spoken but his divine speech is definitive, leaving his bride with a sure guide for faith and practice in the midst of continuous spiritual storms.

The Renewal of Scriptural Sufficiency

* Shortly after the beginning of the Reformation, Rome challenged Scripture's sufficiency in claiming that an infallible tradition and papal confirmation were necessary to provide the one correct and true interpretation of Scripture.

* In response, the Reformers asserted that Scripture is a Sufficient Authority for all things pertaining to faith and godliness

* With **NO NEED** to appeal to another Authority.

* Nor, is there **ANOTHER AUTHORITY ONE CAN APPEAL TO**.

* This conclusion stems from their assumption that **Tradition** is a 2nd infallible source or conduit of divine revelation.

* With such a claim, the Bible is no longer the alone inspired, inerrant, and the church's final Authority.

**** With the demise of *Sola Scriptura* - Sufficiency cannot stand ****

* With the Reformation came a renewal of scriptural sufficiency.

* With a return to Scriptural Authority came the recovery of its Sufficiency.

* Example: In 1561 those who penned the Belgic Confession confessed, “We believe that these Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God, and that whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation is sufficiently taught therein.”

* In the next century, about 1646, the “Divines” at the Westminster Assembly also wrote up a confessional statement addressing sufficiency (very similar to the 1689 confession on Sufficiency) which asked the question ...

* Q: What do the Scriptures principally teach?

* A: The Scriptures principally teach ...

* What man is to believe concerning God

* What duty God requires of man.

* The Westminster Assembly of Divines was a council of Divines (Theologians) & members of the English Parliament appointed from 1643 to 1653 to restructure the Church of England.

* As seen in these confessional statements, sufficiency distinguishes the Protestant evangelical, who turns only to Scripture, stating it contains all that is Necessary for Salvation and Godliness.

Extra-Biblical Sources? Interpretive Assistants vs Lords

* Does sufficiency mean all extra-biblical resources should be eliminated?

* No. To say it does is to confuse *sola scriptura* with *nuda scriptura*.

* *Nuda Scriptura*: A sometimes misunderstood doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* stating that the Bible is the Christian’s **only** theological resource, that it can and should be “denuded” of its churchly context (hence *Nuda Scriptura*).

* *Sola Scriptura* does not preclude other authorities in the church (such as creeds, councils, church leaders, theologians, traditions, etc.).

* Rather, it is to say **Scripture Alone** is our inspired, inerrant, and therefore **final authority**.

* While there may be many important authorities, they are all subservient to Scripture

* **Scripture Alone is God-breathed and without error, fully trustworthy and sufficient for faith and practice.**

* Scripture alone is our **Magisterial (Supreme) Authority** - all others are **Ministerial**.

* Many extrabiblical sources may be gracious gifts that stem from God’s general revelation in the created order. (Ex: Calvin’s Institutes)

* Whether it be archaeology or philosophy, medicine or literature, mathematics or science, these are fruit from the tree of God’s common grace to humanity.

* Nonetheless, we should naturally worry if any extrabiblical source **claims superiority to scriptural truth** or **poses itself in opposition to biblical Christianity**.

* As much as we appreciate any number of extrabiblical sources, they are **maidservants** to that authority which alone is inspired and inerrant: **Scripture**

* When used rightly, extrabiblical sources become greatly helpful interpretive assistants

* But they must never turn into interpretive lords, making God and his word subordinate.

Sufficiency Matters for Christ’s Church

* Although many Christians claim they believe in the sufficiency of Scripture, they often live like they don’t

* Prizing their experience instead of Scripture’s instruction 😞

* **In faith and practice, too many Christians nod at what the Bible says, but politely set it aside to live their life as they think or feel is best.**

- * Sufficiency is affirmed doctrinally, but functionally it is experience that rules the day.
- * Dietrich Bonhoeffer: The Scriptures are sifted **“through the sieve of one’s own experience, despising and shaking out what will not pass through; and one prunes and clips the biblical message until it will fit in a given space, until the eagle can no longer fly in his true element but with clipped wings is exhibited as a special showpiece among the usual domesticated animals.”**
- * **The church as a whole desperately needs to recover Scripture’s Sufficiency.**
 - * Too many pastors and their churches have adopted the culture’s consumeristic mentality.
 - * The Bible is no longer the priority – Pragmatics rule the day.
 - * Who the church is and what the church does are not decided according to the Word of God but are determined according to the felt needs of the surrounding culture.
 - * Whatever will keep visitors coming back for more
 - * Whatever will give the appearance that the church remains relevant
 - * These become the rule for worship and ministry.
- * The church gathers each week because we are summoned by God himself and He, through his called pastors, share His Word with us – from His Scriptures.
- * Since this is God speaking to us in this Word, His Inspired Scriptures take center stage.
 - * It becomes the agenda of Every Song, Every Prayer and Every Sermon.
- * This is why Paul could also command Timothy, *“Preach the word; be prepared in season & out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage with great patience and instruction” (2 Tim. 4:2)*
- * Without the all Sufficient Word, the church will not only starve but it will have nothing of lasting, saving value to offer the world.
 - * God’s Word is:
 - * *Ps 119:93, 105⁹³ I will never forget Your precepts, for by them You have given me life ...¹⁰⁵ Your Word is a lamp unto my feet and light unto my path.*
- * An **All-Sufficient** lamp in a dark world, lighting the path ahead, so that the Christian and the church alike know God and know how to live in his ways as his covenant people.