

The Necessity of Scripture

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[0 : 0 0] Well, this morning we continue into our study. This is week six on the doctrine of the Word, what the Bible teaches us about the Bible. And we've been looking at these different attributes, and you're probably tired of me reviewing that each week, but we want to remember what those attributes are.

We've looked at the inspiration of Scripture. We've looked at the inerrancy of Scripture. We've looked at the sufficiency of Scripture, the clarity of Scripture. And there is one that escapes me.

The authority. Thank you. The authority of Scripture. We've looked at all of those attributes, and we've seen how they connect together. Well, we're looking at one more this morning, and that is the necessity of Scripture.

The necessity of Scripture. In very simple terms, it is the idea that we need the Bible. We need it. Kevin DeYoung, he wrote a book called Taking God at His Word.

This is where our study comes from. It is our guide for this study. And DeYoung defines this particular attribute in this way. We need the revelation of God to know God.

[1 : 1 0] And the only sure, saving, final, perfect revelation of God is found in Scripture. So we need God's Word in order to be saved.

We need God's Word in order to live a life of godliness. Now, that might ring of another attribute that we've already looked at together. That is, the Scriptures are enough, the sufficiency of Scripture.

So we hear that it's what we need for life and godliness, and that was something we looked at with sufficiency. Those two attributes are similar, but they're not the same.

So the sufficiency of Scripture teaches us that God's Word is enough. That we don't need Him to say more to us. We don't need more in order to be saved and to live a life of righteousness.

The necessity of Scripture teaches that God's Word is needed. That we can have no less than what He has said. So to deny sufficiency is to say, I need more.

[2 : 1 6] To deny necessity is to say, I could do with less. So you could think of these almost like the floor and the ceiling. These two attributes keep each other in good balance.

We absolutely need the Bible, but we don't need more than the Bible for life and godliness. So if sufficiency of Scripture is the ceiling, we don't want to go above that.

The necessity is the floor. We don't want to go below it. So those are how they relate to each other. Well, this is where we're going this morning. First, we're going to examine the difference between general revelation, like looking through a telescope tonight, and special revelation.

And then we're going to see that we need special revelation, and we're going to see how Scripture is that to us. That's the special revelation that we need. And finally, we're going to see two ways that Scripture as special revelation is special.

So that's where we're going this morning together, Lord willing. Okay, well, let's consider the difference between general and special revelation. To understand the necessity of Scripture, we need to understand how we can know God.

[3 : 42] How is it that we can know Him? And we see in Scripture that we can know God only as He reveals Himself to us, and the two ways that He does that, general and special revelation.

So general revelation. That is, God making Himself known through the created order to all people, without exception. God making Himself known through the created order to all people.

Psalms 19 begins with these words, The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.

So the created order is personified in Psalm 19. The created order is described to us like a person who speaks. And what does the created order say?

It says God is glorious. Look at His creativity. Acts 14, 16 to 17 also teaches us. There we read this.

[4 : 48] In past generations, God allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. Yet He did not leave Himself without witness. For He did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.

So what is it that we can know about God in creation? We see His goodness. That's what Acts teaches us here. And we see His goodness in that He gives us food to eat, that we might enjoy it, and that we might be satisfied.

So every single time that we take a bite, our taste buds are ringing out and saying, God is good to you. God is good to you.

So without the Bible, we can have a certain amount of knowledge about God. That is what we call general revelation. We know something of God because He has revealed something of Himself through the created order.

He has not left Himself without witness. The heavens and the earth, they testify, they speak to the existence of God. But this knowledge of God is limited in scope.

[6 : 03] We can only know so much of God through general revelation. So we need to talk about special revelation. So special revelation is God's revelation of Himself in words to specific people.

General revelation, all of creation to all of people speaks of God. Special revelation is God revealing Himself in words to specific people.

And so by that definition, that means special revelation did not begin with what we now have as our Bibles. It began in the very beginning. If you want to turn to Genesis chapter 1, we're going to see the first examples of special revelation.

We're going to talk about Adam and Eve. This is the second week in a row that we will talk about Adam and Eve together.

They didn't have God's written revelation of Himself in His word. And yet, God still revealed Himself to them in words that they might understand the terms of their relationship to Him.

[7 : 15] So without speaking, without God doing the speaking, they could know something of Him. They could know that He was the Creator. They could know that He was the ruler over all things.

They could know something of His power and His might and His majesty. They could know something of His beauty and how He created the Garden of Eden. But they couldn't know His will in any specific way.

They couldn't know with certainty what would please Him or what would displease Him. They couldn't know what it would mean to obey Him or to disobey Him. They needed God to speak to them. So in Genesis 1, beginning in verse 26, we will read of special revelation to Adam and Eve.

This is the word of the Lord. Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

So God created man in His own image. In the image of God, He created him. Male and female, He created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

[8 : 36] So what was God's will for Adam and Eve? That they would be fruitful, that they would multiply, that they would fill the earth and that they would subdue the earth, that they would rule over it, have dominion over it.

This two-fold purpose for their lives. And then, how did they know God's will for them? God spoke to them. God communicated to them.

They couldn't have known God's will that they be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, that they subdue it if God hadn't told them. They needed to hear from Him in order to know how to obey.

So this example in Genesis 1 shows us how they could do what pleases Him. Then let's look at Genesis 2, the inverse of that. Now we can see in Genesis 2 what it would look like for them to displease Him, to disobey what He says.

This is the second time that we've been in Genesis 2 and into Genesis 3 considering the Garden of Eden and Adam and Eve's interaction with the Lord there. The first three chapters of our Bibles are just full of foundational truth.

[9 : 45] So we come back to them over and over again because we could learn so much of God and His world, of humanity, of sin and salvation. It's all jam-packed with truth about those things.

So remember last week, we saw that the authority of God and His Word was put on display in Genesis 2. God made all things, therefore He has the right to rule over them, to set the rules for how His creation ought to live.

Adam and Eve, though, chose to disregard, to disobey God's words. They didn't submit to His authority and we saw that they suffered the consequences. Well now, we're going to see how this chapter relates to the necessity of God's Word as well.

So we'll begin reading in chapter 2, verse 15. The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, you may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

[10 : 54] So what was God's will for Adam and Eve in Genesis 2? That they not eat from this particular tree. He spoke to them, specifically to Adam who passed along the information to Eve and all of that was not done very well.

We saw that in Genesis 3. but God communicated perfectly well to them and that is special revelation on display. So like Adam and Eve, we need God to give us knowledge of His will.

And we need that knowledge even more than Adam and Eve did in Genesis 1 and 2. Why is that? Because in Genesis 1 and 2, Adam and Eve had not yet fallen into sin.

They were not in dire straits but we are. Apart from God's special revelation to us, we are in a very terrible situation.

General revelation is not enough for us to know the solution. Romans 1 teaches us this. Verse 20 says, For His invisible attributes, namely His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made.

[12 : 13] There's general revelation. And then what does Paul say next? Man is left without excuse. Meaning, we have no excuse for our rebellion against a good creator, God.

We know that He exists. We see His power, His majesty, we see His goodness, we see His provision. And all of this leaves us without excuse for our rebellion.

Yet nowhere in Scripture are we taught that general revelation is enough for us to be saved. For us to be saved out of our rebellion against God.

Listen to how our confession states this truth. Although the light of nature and God's works of creation and providence give such clear testimony to His goodness, wisdom, and power that men who spurn them are left inexcusable.

Yet they are not sufficient of themselves to give that knowledge of God and His will which is necessary for salvation. So general revelation is insufficient to give us what we need in order to be saved.

[13 : 26] we need God to speak to us. Francis Schaeffer in his systematic theology says this, If unfallen man, Adam and Eve, needed the impartation of knowledge, how much more does fallen man whose whole being is darkened need to be taught of God?

So we see our situation. We see the state that we're in. We need God to speak beyond what the created order tells us of him. This is why we affirm the necessity of Scripture.

Kevin DeYoung says this, The doctrine of the necessity of Scripture reminds us of our predicament. The one we need to know most cannot be discovered on our own.

And it assures us of a solution. This same ineffable one has made himself known through his word. So God spoke to Adam and Eve verbally.

God has spoken to us in written form. This is how now God has so chosen to communicate with us. General revelation, not enough, cannot be saved.

[14 : 40] This provides us with what we need to know in order to be saved. And so our confession continues by saying, God caused this revelation of himself and his will to be written down in all its fullness.

And as the manner in which God formally revealed his will has long ceased, think Hebrews chapter 1, prophets, others that spoke on behalf of God. But what has God done now?

Spoken to us by his son, in his word. Super brief review, we covered this a few weeks ago. So, and as the manner in which God formally revealed his will has long ceased, the Holy Scripture becomes absolutely essential to man.

Did you catch those words? Absolutely essential. Not optional. Not one of many good books that could teach us how we might be saved, but absolutely essential.

Now, why is that? Why is it absolutely needed? Because this is how God has chosen to reveal himself. We can't guess our way to God and his salvation.

[15 : 50] We see this very plainly in Romans chapter 10. Turn over to Romans 10 with me. We see special revelation that we need God to speak to us.

So, this is the same book of the Bible that teaches us general revelation is not enough. So, Paul, very helpfully in Romans, says, not enough in general revelation, but here is the answer.

He doesn't leave us without one. It's in Romans chapter 10. And I'll begin reading in verse 13. verse 13.

Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us? So, faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of the Lord. So, we see the logic of Paul here in Romans 10.

For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Good! But general revelation isn't enough. So, how then do we call on his name? We must hear the word of Christ.

[17 : 20] And so, we need it to be read, we need it to be preached, we need it to be given to us. And that is the answer that Paul gives us. The word is absolutely necessary for us.

I love how John Calvin explains this distinction between general revelation and special revelation. He says this in the Institutes of the Christian religion.

Just as old or bleary-eyed men and those with weak vision, if you thrust before them a most beautiful volume, even if they recognize it to be of some sort of writing, yet can scarcely construe two words, but with the aid of spectacles, will begin to read distinctly.

So, Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God. So, general revelation, we see, but we have confused thoughts of God at best from that.

What does Scripture do? It gives us clarity, like glasses. We need Scripture to clearly see the true God. So, we need Scripture in order to be saved.

[18 : 36] We've made that clear. Now, let's consider we also need Scripture in order to live a life of righteousness. The two-fold purpose here. Scripture is necessary, as John Feinberg puts it, to know how to establish and maintain a saving relationship with God.

So, it's not just that we read the Bible, we come to a saving knowledge of Christ, and then we set it off to the side. There's lots of things that we read once and we never come back to.

That's fine. I read Jane Eyre in high school, read it once, I'm never going to read that again, unless you literally strapped me to a seat, you taped my eyelids open, you put blinders on my eyes so that I could see nothing else, then maybe I would read it, but I would not remember anything of it.

Read it once, we're done. That is not how we treat the Bible. We don't read it once and think it has served its purpose. We couldn't be more mistaken if that's what we do.

We need the Bible as we live now in relationship to the Lord. We need the Bible to understand how it is that we relate to this God who has in his grace saved us.

[19 : 51] Think about the Israelites after God had delivered them out of Egypt. What did he do in Exodus 19? He told them who they were in relationship to him.

He explained to them in vivid detail, we now have a special relationship. Then what did he do in Exodus 20? He laid out the terms for that relationship.

He gave them his good law. So too with us. We have God's word for that very same purpose. We are God's special people unto himself.

This book now lays out for us how we relate to him. We need it. Think about in Matthew 4 when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness.

He hadn't eaten in 40 days. The gospel according to Matthew tells us he was hungry. So what did Satan do? What did the tempter do? He tempted Jesus with something that Jesus would have greatly desired.

[20 : 55] Food. And he said this to Jesus, If you are the son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread. Then how did Jesus reply?

Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. So we live by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

It is our sustaining spiritual food. And Jesus modeled this very life for us because when Jesus said those words, he was quoting from the Bible.

Jesus was saying, I have food, food, it's my father's word. This is what sustains me. He was showing us exactly how we would do this. We live by his word.

So we need God's word. We need God's word to be saved and we need God's word to live out our salvation. Listen to how Deuteronomy 47 puts it.

[22 : 00] Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law. For it is no empty word for you, but your very life.

And by this word you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess. So just like the Israelites, as they prepared to enter the promised land, we need God's word.

God didn't give us his word to sit on a shelf. It is not an empty word to us. It is our very life. So we can't find this vital, unique information anywhere else.

In Kevin de Young's book, he unpacks this truth by showing us now how the Bible reveals a different wisdom and a different love than any wisdom or any love that we could find anywhere else.

So let's look at a different wisdom. wisdom. This is what de Young means. God speaks to us. God must speak to us if we are to be truly wise.

[23 : 12] So there is all kinds of wisdom that we can find promoted in the world today. All kinds of ways that people will say that you can live the good life, that you can get the most out of life.

You've probably seen videos, if you're on social media, you've probably seen videos where people talk about having some kind of secret to success. Whether it be how you manage your time better, how you parent better, how you can climb the career ladder better, or if you're a pastor, there's all kinds of videos that pop up on my feed about how to communicate better, which I was like, oh, okay, I guess the internet is telling me something right now.

How to evangelize better, how to have your church pray better, all kinds of methods that are promoted saying, we've got the secret sauce. You need what we have to say.

And they drag it out forever in those videos and you're waiting to the end to get this secret knowledge, this hidden wisdom that they have to offer and it always falls short, it always falls flat, or they say, now give us your money junk.

No, I'm not denying general revelation, we're not denying common grace, but the wisdom of God's word is not like any wisdom that you will find scrolling your social media feed.

[24 : 41] That kind of wisdom may prove helpful in some way in this life, but it is not what we ultimately need. Only that wisdom is found in God's word, where we learn of the gospel.

The truth that Christ died on the cross to save sinners such as us and to rise from the dead. Now this wisdom is not attractive to the world.

Much of the wisdom that we see on social media is incredibly enticing and attractive. These videos, they are well done videos. They are excellently made, crisp videos.

They do. They draw us in. Whoa, that master class sounds awesome. But it cannot save us. There is only one source.

I held up two fingers. There's only one source for that kind of wisdom. And it's found in God's word. It's not attractive at all. In fact, it's entirely unattractive to the natural man.

[25 : 46] Turn over to 1 Corinthians chapter 1. Paul addresses this very reality in 1 Corinthians chapter 1.

I'll begin reading in verse 18. And we're going to read all the way through the end of the chapter. 1 Corinthians 1, beginning in verse 18.

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, for to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world did not know God through for Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom but we preach Christ crucified a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles but to those who are called both Jews and Greeks Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God for the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men for consider your calling brothers not many of you were wise according to worldly standards not many were powerful not many were of noble birth but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong God chose what is low and despised in the world even things that are not to bring to nothing things that are so that no human being might boast in the presence of

God and because of him you are in Christ Jesus who became to us wisdom from God righteousness and sanctification and redemption so that as it is written let the one who boasts boast in the Lord so there is nothing about the cross that wows people that's what Paul is telling us here there is nothing about a man who suffered the death of a criminal that leaves people in awe saying can you tell me more I want to keep watching this video that people set aside the natural man apart from the spirit's work says that's not very impressive at all de Young says if we want the wisdom of passing fashions impressive brains and talented people then we can look to the world but if we want and if we need a wisdom that is beyond us that is outside of us that will never fail us we must look into the things that

[28 : 41] God has revealed to us through the spirit so scripture uniquely provides us with the wisdom of God we could gain that wisdom nowhere else we need the word for that so too do we need the word to understand the love of God we can find this love nowhere else de Young says what makes the Bible utterly unlike any other book religious or otherwise is the unsurpassing grace we encounter in its pages we need scripture because without it we cannot know the love of God so it might be easy as we think on this particular attribute of the word to think of the necessity of scripture as just kind of this dissemination of information like we need information and we can find this information nowhere else and that's this cold kind of way of approaching it that information that we need is more than information it is understanding of

God's love this isn't just like okay so what are the facts that I need to know in order to be saved it is as we read of how we might be saved God is showing his love to us it isn't just for the head it is for the heart that we might know but it's also for the heart God's word it moves us think about Psalm 119 the psalmist how is he presenting God's word to us not as this cold impersonal transaction God gave me some information I'm glad to have it no he loves the Lord he adores his word this is the book in which we learn of God's great unfailing love for us undeserving hellbound sinners that we are we could never know God's love for us apart from this book because the fact that God loved sinners even when we were his enemies that makes no sense to the natural mind no sense at all why would anybody do that so we need special revelation to understand this truth general revelation would never tell us that

God would love sinners such as us and it would never tell us that his love towards us is put on display particularly in the cross that is where general revelation doesn't serve the purpose only special revelation well one of my favorite passages in the Bible is found in John 6 we'll close our study this morning in John 6 you can turn over there with me and in this passage Jesus who is the word incarnate who is the word made flesh Jesus is teaching some really hard truth and we want to look at the response to his teaching so we're in John 6 beginning in verse 60 John 6 beginning in verse 60 when many many of his disciples heard it they said this is a hard saying who can listen to it but

Jesus knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this said to them do not take offense at this or do you take offense at this then what if you were to see the son of man ascending to where he was before it is the spirit who gives life the flesh is no help at all the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life but there are some of you who do not believe for Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe and who it was who would betray him and he said this is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the father after well Simon Peter answered him Lord to whom shall we go you have the words of eternal life and we have believed and have come to know that you are the holy one of

God so what do we see there in John chapter 6 we see that by the grace of God Simon Peter got it right he got it right he understood his great need he understood that he had nowhere else to turn to where would we go we can't find what you alone have to offer Jesus you have the words of eternal life and what are those words of eternal life but the very words that point to Jesus as the one who gives eternal life and so Peter turned to the word made flesh Jesus had the words of eternal life we need not just it's good to have we need his words for our lives as well we need all of God's word for our lives so do we need more than God's word for life and godliness we don't need more but can we do with less we cannot do with less so let's let's close in prayer father god as we especially consider this particular attribute of the word we come before you with such grateful hearts that you have revealed yourself to us in your word that you have shown us the solution to the problem of our sin we see that you exist in creation we see your creativity we see your goodness we know something of who you are and yet lord we also know nothing of how we might be saved from this state of sin so thank you without the words of eternal life where else do we have to turn but to you father we pray that you would give us this high view of your word that we would live according to it that we would read it that we would meditate on it that we would cherish your word because it is indeed a gift to us and it is a gift that we so desperately needed we pray amen