

The Sufficiency of Scripture

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[0 : 00] Well, we are in a study on the doctrine of the Word of God. If you've been with us for the last couple of weeks, you know that we've been journeying together through a book. I brought it once more.

It is called Taking God at His Word, and it is a book by a brother, Kevin DeYoung. And this book is unpacking for us what the Bible teaches us about the Bible.

Now, in this study, we are looking at different attributes of the Scriptures. Now, most of us are very familiar with the idea that there are attributes of God.

So when you think of the attributes of God, you may think God is eternal. God is unchanging. God is merciful. God is love. God is all-knowing.

All of these different attributes of God. Now, the Bible can also be understood to have attributes, which is perhaps not as naturally familiar to us.

[1 : 04] We looked at two such attributes last week. We looked at the inspiration of Scripture, and we looked at the inerrancy of Scripture. And we saw how those two attributes are very closely related.

So the inspiration of Scripture being that the book is a divine book given to us by God. It is breathed out by Him, as 2 Timothy 3.16 teaches.

Men were carried along by the Holy Spirit. They were born by the Holy Spirit along, so that they wrote exactly what it was that God wanted for them to write.

So that is the inspiration part of Scripture. That's one attribute. Then we consider that it's inerrant, that it is without error, which makes a lot of sense when we think, if it is indeed given to us by God, written by God, a God who is perfect makes no mistakes, and therefore the Word makes no mistakes.

It is inerrant. Well, this week, we're going to consider another attribute of the Bible, the sufficiency of Scripture. Now, the word sufficient itself comes from a Latin verb, meaning to meet the need.

[2 : 14] To meet the need. And so we think, you know, there are times that we'll say, well, that will suffice. And that means that it is enough, which is why the title of chapter 3 of de Young's book is, God's Word is Enough.

So the emphasis in this chapter is on the sufficiency of Scripture. So this is what we're going to do this morning together in the time that remains. We are going to see what sufficiency is.

We are going to see the biblical evidence for that, how the Bible teaches us that it is in itself sufficient. And then we're going to consider four practical takeaways together, four practical considerations together.

So that's where we're going to be going. So first, let's consider what sufficiency is. Now, de Young does not begin the chapter by saying, here is what sufficiency is.

He doesn't answer that question. He actually poses many other questions to begin the chapter. And these questions are of a very practical, relevant nature. This is what he says.

[3 : 17] Have you ever wondered if the Bible is really able to help you with your deepest problems? Have you struggled to know what to do with your life and wished you had some special word from the Lord?

Have you ever felt like the Bible just wasn't enough for living a faithful life in today's world? If you answer yes to any of these questions, then you are struggling with the sufficiency of Scripture. So here is the definition that we'll be working with this morning. Here is what the sufficiency of Scripture is. Everything that we need for salvation and for then living a godly life on our way to eternity with the Lord.

Everything we need for those most important realities of life is met in the Scriptures. Everything that we need for that. That we find in the Scriptures.

And so as I said, DeYoung's chapter, it is entitled, God's Word is Enough. Because we do not need anything else. We don't need another word.

[4 : 21] God's word meets the need. It meets our greatest need. Salvation from God's wrath because of our sins. And then all that we need to live in obedience to God for the rest of the days of our life.

So God's word is sufficient. And we've also made many references in our study together to our Confession of Faith, the 1689. And also, quick plug that I'm going to share.

I grabbed this from, well, I was given this by our wonderful church librarian, Roberta Vanderwall, has gotten us some copies of the 1689 that we will soon have available in the library.

So if you're unfamiliar with the 1689, it was actually just reprinted in a new modern English by Founders Ministry. So if you're curious to learn more of the 1689 or you just want a refresher, here is a copy that will soon be available in the library.

But we've been in our Confession of Faith and the Confession actually begins with these words. So the very first sentence of the first paragraph of the first chapter says this, the Holy Scripture is the all-sufficient, certain, and infallible rule or standard of the knowledge, faith, and obedience that constitute salvation.

[5 : 46] So what that says is the Bible is all-sufficient, meaning that it tells us everything we need to know for all that relates to our salvation, for all that constitutes our salvation.

The Bible is capable of achieving its purpose. Now, de Young argues that of all of the attributes of God's Word, this one, for evangelical Christians such as ourselves, is perhaps the one that we most often forget, that we perhaps most often subtly, subconsciously set aside or don't hold fast to and don't recognize the need to believe it.

This is how he unpacks this argument. we can say all of the right things about the Bible, de Young says, and even read it regularly, but when life gets difficult or just a bit boring, we look for new words, new revelation, and new experiences that bring us closer to God.

We feel rather ho-hum about the New Testament's description of heaven, but we are mesmerized by the accounts of school-aged children who claim to have gone there and back. From magazine articles about my conversation with God to best-selling books where God is depicted as giving special private communications, we can easily operate as if the Bible is not enough.

If only we could have something more than the Scriptures, then we would really be close to Jesus and know His love for us. So, if we're tempted to think this way, then we are saying that we don't believe the Bible to be all-sufficient.

[7 : 32] Now, we may still fully believe in the inspiration of Scripture. We may fully believe and say, yes, the Bible, it is a divine book breathed out by God. We may still fully believe the Bible is inerrant, that it is without errors, that it is infallible, that it is incapable of having errors.

But we can hold fast to those attributes of Scripture while still thinking, yeah, but I wish that I had more. It's like a kid at Christmas who opens all sorts of gifts and recognizes the value and worth of those gifts on Christmas morning.

The child is overjoyed and thankful and happily playing with those toys all of Christmas Day. And then the next day says, I'm kind of bored of these.

I'd like something else. And as a parent, you think, what? We just got you all of these toys and you're already saying, I'm tired of these. Well, we can say, yes, this is God's Word to us.

Yes, it is inspired by God. Yes, it is without any errors whatsoever. Yes, it demands obedience from me, submission from me.

[8 : 44] But God, what else do you have to say to me? Your Word, it's wonderful and all, but now I'd like to have something more than the Scriptures. And God says to us in His Word, my Word is enough.

It's enough. So, where does He say that? Well, we'll see this in a few different places this morning, but let's begin in Hebrews chapter 1. So, turn to Hebrews chapter 1.

this is the first place we'll see the sufficiency of Scripture. And we're going to begin right there in verse 1.

Hebrews chapter 1, beginning in verse 1. This is the Word of the Lord. Long ago, at many times, and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.

But in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature.

[10:00] And He upholds the universe by the word of His power. After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name He has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

So DeYoung unpacks these verses by showing us four different contrasts. So we want to see these four contrasts together. And I've titled them the time of Revelation, the recipients of Revelation, the agents of Revelation, and the methods of Revelation.

So let's look first at the time of Revelation. So what's the contrast? Well, first, the writer of Hebrews says, God spoke long ago.

But now, He has spoken in these last days. Now that doesn't mean that the end of the world is upon us necessarily.

We should be expecting that at any time Christ could come. But when the scriptures speak of in these last days, they simply mean the time between the ascension of Christ and His sure return.

[11:12] There's no other act of redemption left to accomplish. And so we are waiting for Christ to return. That is what's next. And so that puts us in the last days.

So the first contrast, very simple, long ago, in these last days. Here's the second contrast, the recipients of Revelation. God spoke to our fathers, the writer of Hebrews says, which He was writing predominantly to a Jewish audience, hence the title of the book, Hebrews.

And so He speaks of the patriarchs. He speaks of their Jewish ancestry, their forefathers. God spoke to them. Those like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, other important figures in redemptive history, Moses, David.

So God spoke to our fathers long ago. In these last days, He's spoken to us. He had spoken to those under the old covenant. Now He speaks to those under the new covenant, inaugurated by Christ.

So that's the second contrast. Spoke to them, but now He has spoken to us. Here's the third. The agents of Revelation, or the means by which God speaks, or the means by which His revelation is given to us.

[12:31] So God spoke by the prophets. And now He has spoken by His Son, the one to whom all of the prophets were building up to, the one to whom all the prophets were pointing to and anticipating.

It was Him, the Son, Jesus Christ, the one who would then be the fullness of God's revelation to us.

So the agents of Revelation, God spoke by the prophets, but now He has spoken by His Son.

Here's the fourth contrast, the method of Revelation. So God spoke in many ways in the Old Testament under the old covenant. God spoke in many ways.

You could probably think of some of those ways right now. He spoke through prophets, those coming to God's people with direct communication from God. He spoke in dreams and visions. He spoke through a burning bush. He spoke through a donkey. He spoke by writing on the wall in the book of Daniel. He spoke in a quiet whisper as He approached and came near to Elijah.

[13:38] But in these last days, God has spoken in a single way by His Son. DeYoung says this, The Son is our great superlative, surpassing all others because in Him we find the fullness and finality of God's redemption and revelation.

God has spoken to us by His Son. And we want to key on something here, the relationship between redemption and revelation. Now when we think immediately of Jesus being the one by whom God has spoken, we may kind of focus in on, hone in on, Jesus' earthly ministry.

We think, oh yes, God has spoken by His Son and we have His words in the Gospel accounts. You may have a Bible where those words are even in red to draw your attention to the words of Christ. But did Jesus stop speaking when He ascended to heaven? No. He continues to speak today. How so?

Well, where does the Word who took on flesh speak to us? In the Word of God. In the written Word of God.

[14:54] He continues to speak to us by His Spirit in the Bible. That is where we hear from Him. And so that's why just three chapters later in the book of Hebrews, chapter 4, verse 12, we read these words.

For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. So Jesus continues to speak to us today. He has dealings not with the hearts of our forefathers, those who came before. He has dealings with our heart in His Word.

The Bible is not an ancient, outdated book that's worthy of just gathering dust on a bookshelf. It is living and active. It's at work in the hearts of God's people today.

Jesus continues to speak. He speaks through His Word. It pierces us. It searches us. It comforts us. It encourages us. It convicts us of sin.

[16:07] And it points us to the Savior. So the Son, the Word who took on flesh, speaks to us today through the Holy Spirit in the written Word of the Scriptures.

So the Son and the Scriptures go hand in hand. We also need to consider that redemption and revelation go hand in hand.

This is how DeYoung explains that. Scripture is enough because the work of Christ is enough. They stand or fall together.

The Son's redemption and the Son's revelation must both be sufficient. And as such, there is nothing more to be done and nothing more to be known for our salvation and for our Christian walk than what we see and know about Christ and through Christ in His Spirit's book.

So redemption has been accomplished. Jesus said it on the cross. It is finished. And the revelation concerning that redemption has been then completed.

[17:19] There's nothing more that needs to be said about the finished work of redemption. and what we know of the finished work of redemption is everything that we need to be saved and then to walk in obedience until we enter into glory with the Lord.

So J.I. Packer said it very plainly. There are no words of God spoken to us at all today except the words of Scripture. So we can say the Scriptures are sufficient for us.

God's Word is enough. All right, so we've now considered what sufficiency is. We've seen it now in the Word, Hebrews chapter 1. So now we want to consider four practical takeaways with the time that we have remaining.

Four practical takeaways that DeYoung gives to us. Why do we care to understand and embrace the sufficiency of Scripture? Here's the first consideration.

With the sufficiency of Scripture, we keep tradition in its place. With the sufficiency of Scripture, we keep tradition in its place.

[18:29] Now a good example of tradition is using confessions. These are a good gift to us from the Lord. They helpfully summarize what we believe that the Bible teaches.

But our confessions are not the Bible. and we should never elevate them to a place that rivals the Scriptures. And we can be guilty of treating our confession or of treasuring our confession as though it is, in fact, God's revelation to us.

Now we wouldn't say that if we were pressed, but we can begin to behave that way. I need to work out a point of theology that I'm wrestling with. Perhaps somebody came to me and said, what do you make of this?

And I'm tempted to go to the confession or to another incredibly good helpful book and say, now what does somebody else say about what the Word of God says? Can they teach me what to believe about the Bible?

Embracing and understanding the sufficiency of Scripture helps to keep us from subconsciously doing this. Now again, there's a place for confessions, a good place.

[19:35] There's a good place for books like taking God at His Word. We wouldn't be teaching through it if that was not to be helpful to us. But our study of the sufficiency of Scripture should help us to see that we keep tradition in its place.

So in this exposition of our confession that I've made reference to, there's an introductory chapter written by Dave Chansky, the brother of Mark Chansky.

If you know Mark Chansky, the coordinator for the RB Network. and Dave Chansky wrote this in the very opening words of his introduction.

I love confessions of faith. Good ones, anyway. I love them because they are so useful. And I love them because they are so delightful. They are so delightful because they express and summarize the teaching of the Bible.

And the Bible is the very Word of God. A good confession is not the very Word of God. But if it is faithful to the Word of God, it is saying what God's Word says.

[20 : 41] So he makes a really good distinction there. He says, confessions are wonderful. They are helpful. He loves the confession. But it is not the Word of God. And we need to remember that.

He goes on to say, Someone who truly loves God's Word should truly love a good confession. He shouldn't love it as much as he loves Scripture itself, but he should love it for the way it speaks, expounds, and illuminates.

The Word of God. Those are important distinctions for us to make. In the introduction to our version of the confession that we have right here, it begins with these words.

The 1689 is not, of course, to be held as an infallible and authoritative rule. Believers are bound by Scripture, by the whole of Scripture, and by nothing but the Scriptures.

And then DeYoung, as only Kevin DeYoung could say in very easy to understand ways, but even these great creeds, catechisms, and confessions are valuable only as they summarize what is taught in Scripture.

[21 : 47] No secondary, man-made text can replace or be allowed to subvert our allegiance to and knowledge of the Bible. Tradition does not have an equal role with the Bible in our knowing the truth.

So don't substitute out the Bible for other good Christian books. That's the first practical consideration. Here is the second.

Because Scripture is sufficient, we will not add to or subtract from the Word of God. We will not add to or subtract from the Word of God.

A common characteristic of many cults that claim to be Christian is that they will hold up the Bible as one of their standards.

And they will have some other revelations, some other writings that they also say these are authoritative to in the same way that the Bible is. Really easy one that comes to mind is Mormonism or Christian scientists.

[22 : 56] There is further revelation from somebody else many, many, many, many years later that they say this too on the same level as the Bible. But we could actually kind of be guilty of thinking in these ways ourselves.

I remember in college when I first learned that the two letters that we have written to us or that we have given to us which were written to the Corinthian church, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians.

Those are not the only letters that Paul wrote. In fact, we have his second letter that he wrote to the Corinthians and his fourth letter that he wrote to the Corinthians.

Why do we think this way? Because Paul speaks of other letters in these letters that he had written. And I remember thinking when I learned that, well, what if we found those letters one day?

Wouldn't that be amazing? Like, we would have more of what Paul said. But then I took it a step further. And I thought, we would have more of the Bible. You see, I was equating the writings of Paul because we have his writings in Scripture.

[24 : 02] I was equating those as though any of his writings were Scripture. But they're not. If we found them today, those would be good. I'm sure. They would be helpful.

They would be encouraging. They would probably be used by God just as many good books that are written by Christians are used by God. But those letters would not suddenly get inserted into our Bibles.

They would be kept separate. Why? Because the canon is complete. We don't add to, and we especially don't subtract from, what God has given us. And there are warnings in Scripture multiple places.

You can read of those warnings in Deuteronomy. You can read of this warning in Revelation. I have it written here in Revelation 22.18. Listen to the warning for those who add to or take away from God's Word.

Revelation 22.18. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book. If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book.

[25 : 05] And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city which are described in this book. Now that was Revelation.

That was speaking of the book of Revelation. So perhaps you're thinking, yeah, but what about everywhere else in Scripture? Could we not add to, subtract from, I mean, yeah, don't do it with Revelation, but could we do it with something else?

Well, that's a theme in Scripture. And as I said, you could see that in Deuteronomy. That said, don't add to my words. You need to obey my commandments as I've given them to you. We read this in the book of Proverbs chapter 30 verses 5 and 6.

Every word of God proves true. He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words lest He rebuke you and you be found to be a liar.

So if we want to say this positively from the Scriptures, Acts 20, 27 speaks of the fact that Paul had preached the whole counsel of God. So we now have in written form the whole counsel of God.

[26 : 10] Not some of His counsel and we're waiting for more. the whole counsel that He's given to us. Now listen to how our confession states the idea. God caused this revelation of Himself and His will to be written down in all its fullness.

The sum total of God's revelation concerning all things essential to His own glory and to the salvation and faith and life of men is either explicitly set down or implicitly contained in the Holy Scripture.

Nothing, whether a supposed revelation of the Spirit or man's traditions is ever to be added to Scripture. So that's the third consideration. It's like the fourth and the final one together.

Or I'm sorry, that was the second. Let's look at the third. You're like, whoa, we can't do math in here. Alright, the third consideration. Since the Bible is sufficient, we can expect the Word of God to be relevant to all of life.

Now, obviously, the Bible does not speak to every single issue or situation that we may face. The Bible says nowhere how to change your oil.

[27 : 20] Okay? I don't think you needed me to say that to know that. But even so, the Bible is still relevant to all of life, even when we find ourselves changing our oil.

How so? Think about this. who has given you the ability to think and reason? And where do we learn of that? Or who has given you the ability to do each step of an oil change in the proper order and not out of order so that you do harm to your engine?

Who gives you the dexterity that you need to unscrew the drain plug? Or who gives you the dexterity to unscrew the oil filter or even to just break the seal?

of the cap on the bottle of oil. Who gives you the patience when something doesn't go right and you get oil all over yourself? The Bible gives us all we need for life and godliness even when we find ourselves doing a very mundane task like changing our oil.

So the Bible may not speak to how to change your oil, but it is still very relevant to that situation in your life. So listen to how DeYoung says it. To affirm the sufficiency of Scripture is not to suggest that the Bible tells us everything we want to know about everything, but it does tell us everything we need to know about what matters most.

[28 : 46] Scripture does not give us exhaustive information on every subject, but in every subject on which it speaks, it says only what is true. And in its truth, we have enough knowledge to turn from sin, find a savior, make good decisions, please God, and get to the root of our deepest problems.

So that's the third consideration. Now, math experts, the fourth. Fourth consideration. The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture invites us to open our Bibles to hear God's voice.

So we've already seen God has spoken to us by his Son. Hebrews 1 teaches us that. God has given us his whole counsel. Acts 20, 27 teaches us that. We don't need to go searching for God's voice as though we lack anything that we need.

2 Peter 1 also teaches us this. Beginning in verse 3, this is what we read. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness.

So God has given us everything that we need for life, meaning our salvation, eternal life. And God has given us everything that we need for godliness, meaning walking in obedience to the Lord.

[30 : 08] God has given us everything that we need that pertains to these fundamental needs. And how has he done that? Well, we continue reading in Hebrews, or in 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 3.

Through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence. Well, where do we find this knowledge of God?

This knowledge that then enables us to live a life, or that pertains to life and godliness? That knowledge is found right here in his word.

This is the knowledge we need for life and godliness. And so we can say that Scripture is enough. We don't need anything else for life and godliness.

Now, if you've been with us the last couple of weeks, we've been in Psalm 119 for one of those Sundays almost the whole time. The other one, we've touched on it. We're going to touch on Psalm 119 again.

[31 : 11] Psalm 119, verse 1. Remember, the psalmist here, he yearns for God's word. He loves God's word.

He needs God's word like he needs food to live. And this is how Psalm 119 begins. We've looked at this verse before. We're going to look at it from another angle this morning.

Verse 1 begins like this. Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord. So if you're a Christian, then you want to be blameless.

That is a good, important goal of the Christian life. Lord, I want to be blameless. I want to walk before you in obedience. I want to live in submission to all that you've said in your word.

That's what I want. How do I live this way? How do I do that? Well, what does that second line of Psalm 119 verse 1 say? We walk in the law of the Lord.

[32 : 17] Those who are blameless are those who walk in the law of the Lord. So they live according to all that God has commanded. They live according to all that God has instructed.

They live according to all that God has said. So where do we find what God has said? We find it in his word. We live according to his word.

So you want to be blameless? Read your Bible and obey what it says by the help of the Spirit. We know the struggle of the Christian life. We know how hard it is to then walk in a way that is pleasing to the Lord.

But that's what we're striving for and by the Spirit's help that's what we're seeking to do. I want to be blameless and I need to read my Bible and I need to seek to obey what it says by the help of the Spirit.

Same truth is taught in 2 Timothy chapter 3 verses 15 to 16. Let me turn there and read it.

[33 : 17] 2 Timothy chapter 3 verses 15 to 16. I'm sorry 16 to 17. A familiar verse to some of us.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

So first of all, all Scripture. This isn't exactly relevant to the sufficiency of Scripture but just a good truth to remember from 2 Timothy 3. All Scripture is breathed out by God. Every bit of it.

I've made reference to this before. Your genealogy in your Bible. They are profitable to you. They are good for you. Don't skip over genealogies. Don't skip over Leviticus.

All of Scripture breathed out by God and profitable to us. So, what does God do with His Scriptures? Verse 17.

[34 : 17] That the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. Not equipped for some good works but God, if you would speak to me in another fashion then I could accomplish other good works.

It equips us for every good work. So, you don't need to hear another word to learn how to live your life to the glory of God.

He has given you His word to equip you to accomplish every good work that He has laid out for you. And so, I'll end with the very words of Kevin DeYoung in his chapter that he uses to end the chapter.

The word of God is more than enough for the people of God to live their lives to the glory of God. The Father will speak by means of all that the Spirit has spoken through the Son.

The question is whether we will open our Bibles and bother to listen. Let's pray together. Father God, we do pray that You would be our help.

[35 : 25] We are such a needy people. We so easily go astray. We so easily neglect to read Your word, neglect to treat Your word as the treasure that it is.

We can so easily find ourselves not really clinging to the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture. And we think, wouldn't it be nice to hear more? Father, we pray that You would keep us from thinking in that way.

and we pray that Your Spirit would guide us, that Your Spirit would be our help to indeed obey what You have already said to us. We struggle with all that You've already said. Why are we asking, can we have more? No, Lord, we pray that You would help us to obey what You have said in Your word and we cannot do it apart from Your Spirit at work in us. So we pray that He would do that work, that You would be sanctifying us in Your grace. We pray You would grow us. We pray that You would mature us. We pray that You would help us to treasure Your word and to believe indeed that Your word is enough. It meets the need for our lives. [36 : 32] We pray this all in Jesus' name. Amen.