

*Is the Bible enough for knowing what God wants us to think or do?*

A) Definition of the Sufficiency of Scripture (127)

*The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.*

- 1) Salvation (2Ti 3:15-16, 1Pe 1:23)
- 2) Living the Christian Life (2Ti 3:16, Psa 119:2)

B) We can find all that God has said on particular topics and answers to our questions (128).

1) The sufficiency of Scripture enables us to focus our search for God's words to us on the Bible alone. [= the Reformation doctrine of *sola Scriptura*, "the Scripture alone"]

2) What about other means of guidance today?

a) I do believe that God uses subjective impressions of his will to guide us day by day, for the Bible talks about being "led by the Spirit" (Rom. 8:9, 14, 16; Gal. 5:16-18, 25).

b) I also believe that God can guide us through "prophecies" or reports of what God has brought to mind that are spoken to us by other people (1 Cor 14:29; 1 Thess. 5:20-21).

c) But these can never = Scripture in authority, and should be tested by Scripture, by what else we know about a situation, and by counsel from wise friends.

d) While God may guide you individually to do something based on subjective guidance that can't be proven from Scripture, the sufficiency of Scripture means that you should not try to force that decision on all other Christians in your church. (Example: fasting on a certain day, not reading the Sunday paper (!), not eating certain foods, etc.: see Rom 14:1-12.)

3) It is possible to collect all the passages that directly relate to doctrinal issues (for example, the atonement, the person of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit) or to ethical issues (raising children, marriage/ divorce, truthfulness/ lying, the Christian and civil government, etc.) .

→ this is good news!

4) Although the history of the church may help us *understand* what God says to us in the Bible, never in church history has God *added* to the teachings or commands of Scripture.

5) Our search for answers to theological and ethical questions is not a search to find what various believers have thought in the history of the church, but is a quest to find and understand what God himself says to us in his own words, which are found in Scripture and only in Scripture.

C) The amount of Scripture given was sufficient at each stage of redemptive history (129).

1) *God has not spoken* to mankind any more words which he requires us to believe or obey other than those which we have now in the Bible.

a) The doctrine of sufficiency does not imply that *God* cannot add any more words to those he has already spoken to his people. It rather implies that *man* cannot add on his own initiative any words to those that God has already spoken.

b) God could tell his people that his words to them were sufficient at many different points in the history of redemption. (Deu 29:29)

c) After the assembling of the books of the New Testament canon, no further central redemptive acts of God in history have occurred: thus no further words of God have been given to record and interpret those acts for us. (Deu 4:2, Deu 12:32, Pro 30:5-6, Rev 22:18-19)

D) Practical applications of the sufficiency of Scripture

1) Encourages us as we try to discover what God would have us to *think* (about a particular doctrinal issue) or to *do* (in a particular situation). Everything God has to tell us about that question is found in Scripture.

- a) The Bible does not answer all the questions we might think up (for example, order of worship) (Deu 29:29)
  - b) Frequent practice in searching the Scripture for guidance → increasing ability to find accurate, carefully formulated answers to our problems and questions.
- 2) Reminds us that we are to add nothing to Scripture and consider no other writings of equal value to Scripture (for example, *Book of Mormon*, *Science and Health with a Key to the Scriptures*)
  - 3) God does not require us to believe anything about himself or his redemptive work not found in Scripture (for example, collections of alleged sayings of Jesus, “lost” gospels).
  - 4) No modern revelations from God are to be placed on a level equal to Scripture in authority.
  - 5) Nothing is sin that is not forbidden by Scripture either explicitly or by implication. (Psa 119:1)
  - 6) Nothing is required of us by God that is not commanded in Scripture either explicitly or by implication. (Psa 119:44-45, Psa 119:165)
  - 7) In our doctrinal and ethical teaching we should emphasize what Scripture emphasizes and be content with what God has told us in Scripture (for example, not making obscure portions of Scripture into major teachings). (Deu 29:29)

### **QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL APPLICATION**

1. In the process of growing in the Christian life and deepening your relationship with God, approximately how much emphasis have you placed on reading the Bible itself and how much on reading other Christian books? In seeking to know God's will for your daily life, what is the relative emphasis you have put on reading Scripture itself and on reading other Christian books? Do you think the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture will cause you to place more emphasis on reading Scripture itself?
2. What are some of the doctrinal or moral questions you are wondering about? Has this chapter increased your confidence in the ability of Scripture to provide a clear answer for some of those questions?
3. Have you ever wished that the Bible would say more than it does about a certain subject? Or less? What do you think motivated that wish? After reading this chapter, how would you approach someone who expressed such a wish today? How is God's wisdom shown in the fact that he chose not to make the Bible a great deal longer or a great deal shorter than it actually is?
4. If the Bible contains everything we need God to tell us for obeying him perfectly, what is the role of the following in helping us to find God's will for ourselves: advice from others; sermons or Bible classes; our consciences; our feelings; the leading of the Holy Spirit as we sense him prompting our inward desires and subjective impressions; changes in circumstances; the gift of prophecy (if you think it can function today)? What is the role of prayer in seeking guidance? What should we pray for?

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