

## The Sufficiency of Scripture

If I could go around this room this morning and have a conversation with each of you, my guess is that I would learn that many of you are facing difficult situations and that you are trying to figure out what you should do; how you should handle the situation.

- Maybe you are having a conflict with someone at work or maybe with your new roommate in the residence hall. You want things to be better. Where do you go for wisdom on how to address this situation?
- Your marriage is in trouble. You are trying to figure out if you are going to stay committed and work on it or if you are going to walk away. What's the right thing to do?
- You have questions about human sexuality or gender issues. And this is not just a theoretical question for you; these questions impact you personally or a loved one. Where do you go for answers?
- You are facing stress that is affecting your health. Where do you go for wisdom on how to deal with your stress and the anxiety that you are feeling?

Life is full of these kinds of questions, right? And so seriously, where DO you go for answers? Is your first instinct to find a book or podcast that addresses the issue; is it to find a website listing 10 life hacks in that area? Where do you go?

Today, we continue our four-week study called *Formed by the Scriptures*. We are taking a break from our series in the book of Acts to study four core attributes of Scripture. We've looked at the Authority and the Necessity of Scripture. Today, we are looking at the Sufficiency of Scripture.

Here's the core idea when we say that Scripture is sufficient: **God's Word tells us everything we need to know for salvation and godliness.** In other words, God's word is enough. It may not be everything we would like to know, but it is everything we NEED to know to bring us to salvation and to equip us to live a godly life.

This topic has challenged me this week. I believe in the sufficiency of Scripture and yet so often it isn't my first instinct to search the Scriptures for wisdom on the challenging things in my life. So often I want to find a Christian book or podcast that addresses the issue. Do you relate? My hope for all of us as we think about the sufficiency of Scripture is that we will be people who let Scripture be the first and loudest voice as we address the many questions of life that we face.

In our time this morning, I want to look at a couple of passages that teach the sufficiency of Scripture, and then spend some time looking at Psalm 1, which paints a picture of what an approach to Scripture might look like in light of its sufficiency. And so, let's start with what the Scripture says about itself in this area.

**Scripture tells us everything we need to know for salvation** (2 Timothy 3:14-15)

Two weeks ago, Steve taught on the authority of Scripture from 2 Timothy 3. I want to return to that passage because it also teaches the sufficiency of Scripture. In 2 Timothy 3:14-15, Paul wrote to Timothy:

*<sup>14</sup> You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, <sup>15</sup> and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (NASB2020)*

In Romans 1:20, Paul teaches that God has revealed Himself in creation, but general revelation is not enough to bring us to saving knowledge of God. It is NOT sufficient. What is sufficient are the things that are revealed to us in the Scriptures. It was the Scriptures that gave Timothy *the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*.

Paul says that salvation is found through faith in Jesus Christ. Scripture teaches that salvation is found ONLY in Jesus based on His redemptive work. And how does anyone learn about his redemptive work? Through the Scriptures. Scriptures tell us everything we need to know for salvation, because it tells us everything we need to know about Jesus and his sufficient work of redemption.

If you are on a quest to know God, read the Bible. If you are trying to understand who Jesus is and why he came to earth, read the Bible. If you are trying to understand what Christians mean by salvation, read the Bible. I would encourage you to start with the Gospel of John. There is no other source we need to go to to understand salvation. There is no other sacred writing, or church authority to whom we must go. God's word tells us everything we need to know for salvation.

Secondly, **Scripture tells us everything we need to know for godliness** (Psalm 19:7-14; Psalm 119:1; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3-4).

Scripture tells us everything we need to know to live a life that is pleasing to God. Paul continues in 2 Timothy 3 and says:

*<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup> so that the man or woman of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work.*

Paul says that Scripture, through its teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training work in our lives makes a person *fully capable, equipped for every good work*. Scripture teaches us everything we need to know to live a godly life. There is not one aspect of living a life that pleases God that you will miss if you follow the teachings of Scripture.

Now, I've listed a couple of other passages in the outline that support this same idea that I will let you check out on your own time, but since we've encouraged you to spend time in Psalm

119, I did want to mention that in the very first verse of Psalm 119 we see a statement about the Word of God being sufficient for instructing us how to live in a way that honors God. It says:

<sup>1</sup> Blessed are those whose way is blameless,  
Who walk in the Law of the LORD.

Whose life is blameless? Who lives a godly life? The one who walks in the Law of the Lord. Everything we need to know about walking in a way that is pleasing to God is found in his Word. Scripture is sufficient. It tells us everything we need to know for godliness.

Scripture tells us everything we need to know for salvation and godliness. And since it is true that Scripture is sufficient for these things, what does this mean for our approach to Scripture? There are a lot of places we could look, but Psalm 1 paints a great picture of . . .

### **An Approach to Scripture in Light of its Sufficiency (Psalm 1).**

Psalm 1 speaks of two ways that a person can follow. There is a way that leads to blessing and a way that leads to destruction. There is a way of security, stability, and prosperity, and there is a way of insecurity and instability. And the thing that determines our way is what we do with God's Word. And so let me read this psalm and offer some reflections on it.

*<sup>1</sup> Blessed is the person who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,  
Nor stand in the path of sinners,  
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!*

The term, *blessed*, could be translated "O the happiness of." The blessed person is one who has a life that is truly to be desired. The psalmist describes this person first by what this person does not do and then by what he does do. And then he gives us a metaphor to help us picture this blessed life.

And so in terms of what he does not do, the blessed person does not walk *in the counsel of the wicked*. He doesn't receive guidance from those who are not orienting their lives around God's Word. He doesn't *stand in the path of sinners*. This is talking about a person who takes the counsel of the wicked and begins to truly stand on that path; to follow the lifestyle of the wicked. Finally, the blessed person does not take a seat among the scoffers. At this point the person is fully identified with the wicked. They are seated with the scoffers. The blessed person does not follow this downward progression of listening to the wicked to the point where he eventually is fully identified with them. What he does do is a very different thing.

*<sup>2</sup> But his delight is in the Law of the LORD,  
And on His Law he meditates day and night.*

The blessed person *delights* in God's word. He desires it more than anything. And because this is true, he meditates on it *day and night*. It is his focus. He constantly thinks on it. He ponders

God's word throughout the day each day. It has been said that whatever shapes a person's thinking shapes his life. What shapes this person's thinking is not the counsel of the wicked. It is not the wisdom of the world. It is God's Word.

What does his life look like as a result? Verse 3:

*<sup>3</sup> He will be like a tree planted by streams of water,  
Which yields its fruit in its season,  
And its leaf does not wither;  
And in whatever he does, he prospers.*

Some of you know that we lived in southern California when I went to seminary. We lived in San Bernardino, which was halfway between LA and Palm Springs. And so, we explored things in both directions. One of the coolest things we saw out in the Palm Springs areas were oases. I can't remember the names of the canyons we visited, but the image is still clear in my mind. I remember parking at the trail head and then hiking a desert trail. On the trail it was hot and dry. There were some small brushy plants, but mostly it was just rocks and sand. But then you come to the canyon and as you descend everything changes. At the bottom of the canyon water flows from the natural springs in the area and because of that everything is different. It is green and lush. Even though it is right in the middle of the desert, the trees in the oasis are flourishing because they are planted by streams of water.

This what the blessed life looks like. This is the fruit of paying attention to God's word. The person who determines to focus on the Scriptures will be like this tree that continues to flourish even in times of drought because it is planted by life-giving *streams of water*. He will be like a tree that bears fruit at the right time and whose leaves don't wither.

And then the psalmist makes this theological statement about the person who allows the Word of God to have this place in his life. He will prosper. The natural result of a life focused on God's Word is one of flourishing; of being prosperous. This is a very different thing than the one whose life is not oriented around God's Word?

*<sup>4</sup> The wicked are not so,  
But they are like chaff which the wind blows away.*

The one who ignores God's Word is not solid and stable. He is *like chaff which the wind blows away*. There is nothing weighty about his life. His life is not prosperous.

*<sup>5</sup> Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.  
<sup>6</sup> For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,  
But the way of the wicked will perish.*

The thing that makes the difference in these two lives is how they treat God's Word. One listens to the counsel of the wicked. The other loves God's Word and allows it to shape his mind and his life. And so regardless of what kind of drought (i.e. difficulty) this person faces in life, he flourishes; he prospers, because he has delighted in God's Word. That's the approach to Scripture that makes sense in light of its sufficiency.

When you are facing difficult life situations, where do you go for answers? What IS shaping your thinking about these things? Is it the best advice that the world has to offer, or is it God's Word?

Just to be clear, I don't think Psalm 1 is saying that we only go to God's Word when we are looking for answers to life's questions. It is painting a picture of a life in which one is constantly letting her mind marinate in the truths of God's Word and who therefore has a life that has been truly formed by the Word. And so therefore when the tough stuff comes, her mind, her life, shaped by God's truth, will know what pleases God.

Scripture is sufficient. God's Word is enough. And since this is true, it makes all the sense in the world that we would have this Psalm 1 approach to the Word – that we approach it with diligence. My hope is that each of us would conclude that God's Word is sufficient – that it tells us everything we need to know for salvation and for godly living – and as such that we would have a Psalm 1 or Psalm 119 commitment to seek God's Word.

Now, before I offer a few thoughts on application, I want to offer a **few points of clarification** of what I am not saying.

- In affirming that Scripture is sufficient, I'm not saying that the Bible contains knowledge about every field of knowledge. It doesn't contain knowledge about golf, or chemical engineering, or building a website for instance. But because it is sufficient it does give us wisdom that applies to these areas.
- I'm not saying that God's Word will tell you who to marry or what job to take, but Scripture does equip us with principles that will speak to the type of person to marry or what job to take.
- I'm not saying we should never read what another Christian teacher is teaching on a specific topic.
- I'm not saying that we should never use extrabiblical sources. These can be gracious gifts from God whether it is knowledge in medicine, or philosophy, or math and science. There is much we can gain from God's general revelation.
- I'm not saying that as we seek to grow in godliness that things like professional counseling have no place. Good counseling helps us put into practice biblical wisdom and as such it has tremendous value.

And so please hear me. There are plenty of things that are helpful to know that the Bible doesn't address. I'm not saying that all you need is the Bible and nothing else. That goes beyond the meaning of the Sufficiency of Scripture. What I am saying is that all these other sources of information and knowledge are subordinate to God's Word. They **MUST ALWAYS** be seen as subordinate to Scripture. God's Word is the entrée, and these other sources of truth are the appetizer. Of course, this analogy breaks down because we eat appetizers first and I'm urging us to go to God's Word first.

All right, let me mention a couple of **points of application**.

First, **Be grateful**. Be grateful that in a world exploding with information, and where voices from every corner are trying to tell us what is right, and how we are to think and live, we don't have to track all that down. We don't have to read every book or hear every comment that people make on a certain topic. We can simply go to God's Word knowing that God has spoken. God's Word tells us everything we need to know for salvation and living a godly life. Be grateful for this truth. There is a kind of simplicity and rest in this truth that is so life-giving.

Secondly, **go to God's Word first for answers to life's questions**. Scripture either specifically addresses our questions or it gives us principles that can guide us as we navigate issues like love, or human sexuality, or marriage and divorce, or money, or how we should relate to civil government, or any another issues of life that we are facing. And so go to Scripture first.

Third, **give yourself wholeheartedly to Scripture**. As I've already mentioned, so often our first impulse is to find what another believer has said about the topic at hand whether it is a doctrinal issue or a practical life issue. We so quickly go to books, podcasts, sermons, or any number of places at times more than we go to the actual words that God has given us. Be a Psalm 1 kind of person. Delight in God's Word. Make it your focus. Read it. Study it. Memorize it. Meditate on it. Knowing that Scripture is sufficient, let it be the thing that is truly forming your mind and your life. Give yourself wholeheartedly to Scripture.