

Theological Equipping Class

Sufficiency of Scripture

July 2, 2023

Why Does this Matter?

- Each age presents different challenges to orthodoxy.
 - 4th century
 - 5th century
 - middle Ages
 - 1970s and 80s
- Sufficiency as the evangelical battle of the day.
- “If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the Word of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Him. Where the battle rages there the loyalty of the soldier is proved; and to be steady on all the battle front besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.” (unknown author)

What is the Sufficiency of Scripture?

- *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.* (Wayne Grudem)
- “Scripture contains all the divine words needed for any aspect of human life.” (John Frame)
- There is nothing that God requires you to know or do or believe that is not addressed in scripture either explicitly or implicitly (by logical implication).
- *“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. Nevertheless we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word.”* (The Westminster Confession of Faith)

Sufficiency in the Bible

- *But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 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. (2 Timothy 3:14–17)*
- *Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord! (Psalm 119:1)*
- *“Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it. (Deuteronomy 12:32)*
- *in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’” (Matthew 15:9)*
- Shabbat elevators and the tendency to expand the law

Clarifications about Sufficiency

- Sufficiency **does not** mean that the Bible contains everything you *want* to know.
- Sufficiency **does not** mean that the Bible contains everything you think you *need to know to practically reach some secular goal*.
- Sufficiency **does not** mean that sources such as philosophy, reason, history, and church tradition are useless.
- Sufficiency **does not** mean that we will actually obey everything in the Bible.

- Sufficiency **does** mean that we don't have any other books on equal level with scripture.

- Sufficiency **does** mean that God does not require us to believe anything not written in scripture or covered under a general rule of scripture.

- Sufficiency **does** mean that nothing is sin that is not forbidden by scripture explicitly or by the broader implication of another rule in scripture.

- Sufficiency **does** mean that no modern charismatic "prophecy" is on an equal level with scripture.

- Sufficiency **does** mean that, though experience and practical wisdom can be helpful, they are not *needed* to minister to others or yourself.

- Sufficiency **does** mean that the authority of churches, preachers, leaders, elders, denominations, councils and creeds only extend insofar as they are correctly interpreting and applying scripture.
 - If, then, I am not convinced by testimonies of Scriptures, or by clear rational arguments—for I do not believe in the pope or in councils alone, since it has been established that they have often erred and contradicted each other—I am bound by the Bible texts that I quoted. And as long as my conscience is captive to the Word of God, I cannot nor do I want to retract anything when things become doubtful. (Martin Luther)

Putting it to the Test

- Does the Bible contain everything God requires you to know about cancer?
- Does the Bible alone contain all the information you need to know to minister to someone who is same-sex attracted even if you are not?
- Does the Bible alone contain all the information you need to know to minister to people of other races or genders even though you don't share their gender or race?
- Does the Bible alone contain all the information you need to know regarding how to counsel someone who has gone through some experience that you haven't had (divorce, death of a family member, debilitating illness, etc.)?
- Does the Bible alone contain all the information you need to know regarding how to think about politics?
- *"Let us use great caution that neither our thoughts nor our speech go beyond the limits to which the Word of God itself extends...without inquiring about him elsewhere than from his Word. And let us not take it into our heads either to seek out God anywhere else than in his sacred Word, or to think anything about him that is not prompted by his Word, or to speak anything that is not taken from that Word." (John Calvin)*