

Sola Scriptura

Part 2 of 4 – All-Sufficient

In the last article, we examined two specific components of our statement of faith regarding God's Word. Through the moving of the Holy Spirit, God inspired men to pen the message of Scripture. God used each writer's unique experiences, perspective, personality, vocabulary, emotions and life to compile a complete work that provides everything we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3-4), and reveals the very thoughts, directives, will, and characteristics of His divine nature. In this article, we will examine a third component of this statement of faith relating to the doctrine of the all-sufficiency of Scripture.

WE BELIEVE that the Bible is sufficient

Perhaps the most succinct passage on the sufficiency of Scripture is found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 – “All scripture is ... profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” Paul says that for a man of God to be perfect (Gr. *artios* def'n: complete) and thoroughly furnished (Gr. *exartizo* def'n: finished, fully equipped), all he needs is all of Scripture. Paul details the sufficiency of Scripture by using four distinct terms: doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction. The word doctrine (Gr. *didaskalia*) means instructions, information or teachings; reproof (Gr. *elegchos*) means proof, convictions, or evidence; correction (Gr. *epanorthosis*) conveys a straightening up again, rectifying or reforming; and instruction (Gr. *paideia*) means tutorage, education, or training. Everything we need to be complete and fully equipped as a soldier of Jesus Christ, from instructions to evidence to correction and training, is contained in the Word of God. And every part of Scripture is profitable for these four disciplines – nothing should be neglected. Scripture is sufficient for life and godliness!

In looking over the entire Bible, Psalm 19:7-9 is the most monumental and comprehensive statement on the sufficiency of Scripture. Penned by David under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, these three verses offer unwavering testimony from God Himself about the sufficiency of His Word for every situation. In this passage David makes six statements, each highlighting a characteristic of Scripture and describing its effect in the life of the one who embraces it. Taken together, these statements paint a beautiful picture of the sufficiency of God's Word.

Scripture Is Perfect, Converting the Soul

In the first statement (v.7), David says, “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul.” This word “perfect” is the translation of a common Hebrew word meaning “whole,” “complete,” or “sufficient.” It conveys the idea of something that is comprehensive, so as to cover all aspects of an issue. Scripture is comprehensive, embodying all that is necessary to one's spiritual life. God's perfect law, David says, affects people by “converting the soul” (v.7). In other words, Scripture is so powerful and comprehensive that it can convert or transform the entire person, changing someone into precisely the person God wants them to be. God's Word is sufficient to transform through salvation even the most broken, wicked, blasphemous, unregenerate and unholy life.

Scripture Is Trustworthy, Imparting Wisdom

David further expands the scope of scriptural sufficiency in Psalm 19:7, writing, “The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.” David’s use of the word “sure” means unwavering, immovable, unmistakable, reliable, and worthy to be trusted. It provides a solid foundation on which to build one’s life and eternal destiny. This sure foundation of the Word of God makes the simple wise (v.7). Instead of being undiscerning, ignorant, and gullible, a simple man can become wise by studying God’s Word. As he learns to obey and submit to Scripture and learns how to apply it to his circumstances, the Word of God takes his simple mind and makes it skilled, experienced and wise in the issues of life.

Scripture Is Right, Causing Joy

In verse 8, David adds a third statement about Scripture’s sufficiency: “The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart.” Rather than simply indicating what is right as opposed to wrong, the word translated “right” has the sense of showing someone the true, straight path. The truths of Scripture lay out the proper path through the difficult maze of life. God’s Word not only provides the light to our path (Ps. 119:105), but also sets the route before us. Because it steers us along the right course in life, God’s Word brings great joy. If one is depressed, anxious, fearful, or doubting, the solution is not found in self-indulgent pursuits like self-esteem and self-fulfillment - the solution is found in learning to obey God’s counsel and sharing in the resulting delight. Divine truth is the fount of true and lasting joy. All other sources are shallow and fleeting.

Scripture Is Pure, Enlightening the Eyes

Psalm 19:8 gives a fourth characteristic of Scripture’s utter sufficiency: “The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.” This word “pure” means clear or lucid and it indicates that Scripture is not mystifying, confusing, or puzzling. Granted, there may be things in Scripture that are hard to understand (2 Pet. 3:16), but taken as a whole, the Bible is not a bewildering book. Scripture brings understanding where there is ignorance, order where there is confusion, truth where there is lies and deception, and light where there is spiritual and moral darkness.

Scripture Is Clean, Enduring Forever

In Psalm 19:9 David uses the term “fear” as a synonym for God’s Word: “The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever.” This “fear” speaks of the reverential awe for God that compels believers to worship Him. Scripture, in this sense, is the divine manual on how to worship the Lord. The Hebrew word “clean” speaks of the absence of impurity, filthiness, defilement, or imperfection. Scripture is without sin, evil, corruption, or error. The truth it conveys is therefore absolutely undefiled and without blemish, and because it is flawless, Scripture endures forever. It is God’s revelation for every generation. The Bible was written by the omniscient Spirit of God, who is infinitely more wise and intelligent than anyone who dares stand in judgment on Scripture’s relevancy for our society. Scripture has always been and will always be sufficient.

Scripture Is True, Altogether Righteous

Verse 9 provides the final characteristic and effect of God's all-sufficient Word: "The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether." The word "judgments" in this context refers to ordinances or divine verdicts from the bench of the Supreme Judge. The Bible is God's standard for judging the life and eternal destiny of every person. Because Scripture is true, it is "righteous altogether." The implication of that phrase is that its truthfulness produces a comprehensive righteousness in those who accept it. Contrary to what many are teaching today, there is no need for additional revelations, visions, words of prophecy, or insights. In contrast to the theories of men, God's Word is true and absolutely comprehensive. Rather than seeking something more than God's glorious revelation, Christians need only to study and obey what they already have. Scripture is sufficient!

Next time, we will investigate our belief in the infallibility and inerrancy of God's Word. How can a book that was written by over 40 different authors over a span of 1,600 years be absolutely accurate and free from error?

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