

Systematic Theology Pt. 8

Bibliology (G)

“Sufficiency”

Are we to look for other words from God in addition to those we have in Scripture? James Montgomery Boice in his book *Standing on the Rock, Biblical Authority in a Secular Age* said, “However, important as the matter of inerrancy is, I do not think it is the most critical biblical issue facing the American church at the present time in this last decade of the twentieth century. The issue I would pinpoint is the sufficiency of God’s Word. The questions surrounding this are numerous. Do we really believe God has given us what we need in this book? Or do we think we have to supplement the Bible with other man-made things? Do we need sociological techniques to do evangelism? Must we attract people to our churches by showmanship and entertainment? Must we attract people to our churches by showmanship and entertainment? Do we need psychological and psychiatry for christian growth? Do we need extra-biblical signs or miracles for guidance? Is the Bible’s teaching adequate for achieving social progress and form?”

I. Definition of 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 all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him completely.

Scriptural Support:

A. Isa. 55:8-11

B. Psalm 19:7-11

C. 2 Tim. 3:15-17

Seven things the Scriptures are Sufficient for:

1. Salvation v15
2. Doctrine v16
3. Reproof v16
4. Correction v16
5. Instruction in righteousness v 16
6. Mature v17
7. Equipped for service v17

II. We Can Find All that God has said on Particular Topics, and We can Find Answers to Our Questions

We will never perfectly obey all the Bible teaches in this life! But because the Bible is sufficient for life and godliness, we can focus our search for truth and wisdom in God's word alone! For example, marriage and divorce; parenting; working; government, etc.

III. The Amount of Scripture Given was Sufficient at Each Stage of Redemptive History

- You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it; that you may keep the commandments of the Lord. (Deut. 4:2).
- Everything that I command you you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to it or take from it. (Deut. 12:32)
- 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 a liar. (Prov. 30:5-6)
- 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, 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. (Rev. 22:18-19)

IV. Practical Application of the Sufficiency of Scripture

1. The sufficiency of Scripture should encourage us as we try to discover what God would have us to "think" or "do".

"This does not mean that the Bible answers all questions that we might think up., for "The secret things belong to the Lord our God" (Duet. 29:29). But it does mean that when we are facing a problem of genuine importance to our Christian life, we can approach Scripture with the confidence that from it God will provide us with guidance for that problem. There will of course be some times when the answer we find is that Scripture does not speak directly to our question. (This would be the case, for example, if we tried to find from Scripture what "order of worship" to follow on Sunday mornings, or whether it is better to kneel or perhaps to stand when we pray, or at what time we should eat our meals during the day, etc.) In those cases, we may conclude that God has not required us to think or to act in any certain way with regard to that question (except perhaps, in terms of more general principles regarding our attitudes and goals). But in many other cases we will find direct and clear guidance from the Lord to equip us for "every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17). As we go through life, frequent practice in searching Scripture for guidance will result in an increasing ability to find accurate, carefully formulated answers to our problems and questions. Lifelong growth in understanding Scripture will thus include growth in the skill of rightly understanding the Bible's teachings and applying them to specific questions." -Wayne Grudem

2. The sufficiency of Scripture reminds us that we are to add nothing to Scripture, and that we are to consider no other writings of equal value to Scripture.

- Jude 3
- Illus. Almost all cults: Mormons & Christian Scientists, etc.
- Illus. Even some Christian churches! For example, visions, dreams, etc.

3. The sufficiency of Scripture also tells us that God does not require us to believe anything about himself or his redemptive work that is not found in Scripture.

“It should be noted at this point that whenever challenges to the sufficiency of Scripture have come in the form of other documents to be placed alongside Scripture (whether from extrabiblical Christian literature of the first century or from the accumulated teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, or from the books of various cults such as the Book of Mormon), the result has always been (1) to deemphasize the teachings of the Bible itself and (2) to begin to teach some things that are contrary to Scripture. This is a danger of which the church must constantly be aware.” -Wayne Grudem

4. The sufficiency of Scripture reminds us that nothing is sin that is not forbidden by Scripture either explicitly or by implication.

- Illus. Christian Liberty- Rom. 14 & 1 Cor. 8

“There is always the tendency among believers to begin to neglect the regular daily searching of Scripture for guidance and to begin to live by a set of written or unwritten rules (or denominational traditions) concerning what one does or does not do in the Christian life. Furthermore, whenever we add to the list of sins that are prohibited by Scripture itself, there will be harm to the church and to the lives of individual believers. The Holy Spirit will not empower obedience to rules that do not have God’s approval from Scripture, nor will believers generally find delight in obedience to commands that do not accord with the laws of God written on their hearts. In some cases, Christians may repeatedly and earnestly plead with God for “victory” over supposed sins that are in fact no sins at all, yet no “victory” will be given, for the attitude or action in question is in fact not a sin and is not displeasing to God. Great discouragement in prayer and frustration in the Christian life generally may be the outcome. In other cases, continued or even increasing disobedience to these new “sins” will result, together with a false sense of guilt and a resulting alienation from God. Often there arises an increasingly uncompromising and legalistic insistence on these new rules on the part of those who do follow them, and genuine fellowship among believers in the church will fade away. Evangelism will often be stifled, for the silent proclamation of the gospel that comes from the lives of believers will at least seem (to outsiders) to include the additional requirement that one must fit this uniform pattern of life in order to become a member of the body of Christ.” -Wayne Grudem

5. The sufficiency of Scripture also tells us that nothing is required of us by God that is not commanded in Scripture either explicitly or by implication.

- Illus. Someone claims a message from God telling us what to do! Such as J.W.’s going door to door or Mormons missions.

6. The Sufficiency of Scripture reminds us that in our doctrinal and ethical teaching, we should emphasize what Scripture emphasizes and be content with what God has told us in Scripture.

- Illus. Baptism for the Dead- 1 Cor. 15:29

“Unfortunately, a similar pattern has too often occurred among evangelicals within various denominations. The doctrinal matters that have divided evangelical Protestant denominations from one another have almost uniformly been matters on which the Bible places relatively little emphasis, and matters in which our conclusions must be drawn from skillful inference much more than from direct biblical statements. For example, abiding denominational differences have occurred or have been maintained over the “proper” form of church government, the exact nature of Christ’s return, the categories of persons who should be admitted to the Lord’s Supper, the way in which God planned that the merits of Christ’s death would be applied to believers and not applied to unbelievers, the proper subjects for baptism, the correct understanding of the “baptism in the Holy Spirit,” and so forth. We should not say that these issues are all unimportant, nor should we say that Scripture gives no solution to any of them. However, since all of these topics receive relatively little direct emphasis in Scripture, it is ironic and tragic that denominational leaders will so often give much of their lives to defending precisely the minor doctrinal points that make their denominations different from others. Is such effort really motivated by a desire to bring unity of understanding to the church, or might it stem in some measure from human pride, a desire to retain power over others, and an attempt at self-justification, which is displeasing to God and ultimately unedifying to the church?” -Wayne Grudem