

Lesson 3: 2LCF Chapter 1: Of The Holy Scriptures

Paragraphs 6-10

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

2 Timothy 3:14-17

In paragraphs 1-5 we dealt with the necessity (1), identity (2-3), and authority (4-5) of Scripture. In paragraphs 6-10, we will address its sufficiency (6), clarity (7), availability (8), and finality (9-10).

- IV) Its Sufficiency (Paragraph 6)
- V) Its Clarity (Paragraph 7)
- VI) Its Availability (Paragraph 8)
- VII) Its Finality (Paragraphs 9-10)

Paragraph 6.

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation 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, and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.

2 Tim. 3:15-17; Gal. 1:8,9; John 6:45; 1 Cor. 2:9-12; 1 Cor. 11:13,14; 1 Cor. 14:26,40

Exposition

Chapter 1 and paragraph 6 of the Confession begins by outlining the sufficiency of Scripture. It begins: ***“The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture...”***

Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley provide this succinct definition of sufficiency:

The sufficiency of Scripture is limited to the Bible's purpose in revealing truth for our salvation and obedience (Ps. 19:7-11; John 20:31). ²⁸

²⁸ Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2019), 397.

Sam Waldron defines the sufficiency of Scripture in this way

Like “The sufficiency of the Scriptures is nothing more nor less than their sufficiency to achieve the purposes of redemptive revelation... the Bible is not sufficient for all that we do, but it does speak to all we do sufficiently as to the glory of God, the way of salvation, and the path of duty... “It is sufficient to achieve the purposes of redemptive revelation without supplementation by new revelation. (claimed by some and Baptist and others) for traditions of men (like those extra biblical traditions claimed by the Roman Catholic Church.)”²⁹

In providing a definition of sufficiency, Waldron provides the following helpful illustration:

“We may take my way of illustration a typical Tuesday in the life of Chris College, a university student majoring in engineering. His Bible is insufficient as a textbook for his classes in calculus, biology, and French; but it does show him the path of duty throughout a typical Tuesday. It teaches him to pray, and read his Bible in the morning, to be diligent and discerning in his studies, and to avert his eyes when the college temptress walks through the library when he is studying. It does provide him an infallible record of creation and redemptive history. This record does set certain boundaries or limits which guide him in his study of biology history. Any theory of history or biology which contradicts the historical statements of the Bible will properly reject. Thus, while the ethno-religious sphere of human knowledge is distinct from other spheres, it is basic to them all.”³⁰

1 Timothy 3:15-17 is often thought of as the “classic assertion” of the sufficiency of Scripture. Here Waldron points out that there are three assertions made in this text regarding the sufficiency of the Bible: 1) It makes on wise for salvation (v. 15). 2) It presents with a four-fold usefulness: for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness (v. 16). 3) It is not makes a man complete and sufficient for all of his needs as a Christian (v. 17).³¹

It should be noted that many other texts teach the sufficiency of Scripture. These include:

Deuteronomy 4:2

² You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you.

Acts 20:27

... for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

Psalms 119:65

Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.

Later in 1:6, the Confession adds: “***nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit, or traditions of men.***”

²⁹ Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, 5th ed. (Welwyn Garden City, UK: EP Books, 2016), 52-53.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 54.

This phrase in the Confession addresses a myriad of issues that were present in the church in the 17th Century, but that also speak to issues that have existed throughout the history of the church, and issues that are still relevant today.

As I noted in previous lectures, many statements in the 2LCF interact with the excesses of the Roman Catholic Church. Here the Confession seeks to rule out all tampering with God's Word through church traditions or papal decrees. Moreover, it is likely dealing with the excess of Quakerism.

John Reuther also points out that this obsession with new revelation is not a modern phenomenon, nor is it a 17th Century phenomenon, But it is a phenomenon that is as old as the church itself. He writes:

"Church history evidences this tendency [to add to God's Word] Early in the second century through a teacher named Montanus, after whom the movement known as Montanism was named. This movement was directed against the coldness and spiritual apathy of the profess church. The champion of the charismatic gifts and the continuing revelation of the spirit through gifted men. It resisted, systematic study of the Bible and emphasized experience more than knowledge. Tertullian was a defender of this position. It was the precursor of both the pietistic and Pentecostal movements in modern times."³²

But this is completely at odds with what the church has believed through the ages. One article highlights this in forceful terms:

Claudius Apollinarius, Bishop of Hierapolis, in about 172, also composed a book against Montanism, as did another churchman from Asia Minor, Apollonius, in about 210. Publius Julius, Bishop of Dabellum in Thrace and a large number of other bishops signed a public letter condemning the heresy. Serapion, Bishop of Antioch (d. 211), affirmed, "This false order of the so-called new prophecy has been abhorred by the whole brotherhood throughout the world."³³

Another anonymous early church commentator adds this:

The faithful in Asia met for this purpose [i.e., of examining Montanism] many times and in many places in Asia. They examined the recent sayings [i.e., prophecies] carefully, declared them to be profane, and rejected the heresy. So at length they were thrust out of the Church and excluded from the fellowship.³⁴

In volume 1 of his Reformed Systematic Theology, Beeke and Smalley quote several of the reformers and Puritans on this topic:

"John Calvin said, "All our wisdom is contained in the Scriptures, and neither ought we to learn, nor teachers to draw their instructions, from any other source." William Perkins wrote, "The sufficiency is that, whereby the word of God is so complete, that nothing may be either put to it, or taken from it, which appertaineth to the proper end thereof." And William

³² John Reuther, "Chapter One: Of The Holy Scriptures," in *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura (Ross-shire: Mentor, 2022), 53.

³³ Retrieved from <https://cprc.co.uk/articles/montanism/>

³⁴ Ibid.

Ames said, "All things necessary to salvation are contained in the Scriptures and also those things necessary for the instruction and edification of the church."³⁵

Paragraph 7.

All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of ordinary means, may attain to a sufficient understanding of them.

2 Pet. 3:16; Psalms 19:7; Psalms 119:130

Exposition

Paragraph 7 deals with the clarity or perspicuity of Scripture.

Waldron observes that here in the Confession makes three important assertions:

- 1) The Bible is clear.
- 2) The Bible is not equally clear in all its parts.
- 3) The Bible is not equally clear to all.

1) In several places, the perspicuity of Scripture is clearly taught.

Psalm 19:7-8

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;
the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;

Psalm 119:130

The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.

Proverbs 6:23

For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light,
and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life,

Matthew 22:31

But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God?

2) While the Scriptures are clear, the Bible is not equally clear in all its parts.

2 Peter 3:14-16

Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

3) While the Scriptures are clear, the Bible is not equally clear to all people (ie. those without the Spirit of God).

³⁵ Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2019), 397.

1 Corinthians 2:14

The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

Paragraph 8.

The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as in all controversies of religion, the church is finally to appeal to them. But because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have a right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded in the fear of God to read, and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship Him in an acceptable manner, and through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope.

Rom. 3:2; Isa. 8:20; Acts 15:15; John 5:39; 1 Cor. 14:6,9,11,12,24,28; Col. 3:16

Paragraph 9.

The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which are not many, but one), it must be searched by other places that speak more clearly.

2 Pet. 1:20, 21; Acts 15:15, 16

Paragraph 10.

The supreme judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit, into which Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved.

Matt. 22:29, 31, 32; Eph. 2:20; Acts 28:23