

# A Light in the Darkness

THE DOCTRINE OF THE WORD OF GOD

# Strategies for Living Under Scripture's Authority

- A *Contextual* Reading of Scripture
- A *Liturgical* Reading of Scripture
- A *Historical* Reading of Scripture
  - Scripture should be read and applied with frequent reference to the scaffolding of the beliefs of the historic church, represented in Orthodox creeds and confessions (e.g., The Apostles' Creed, The Nicene Creed).
    - While not Scripture itself, someone who finds their interpretation of the Bible disagreeing with the core elements of historical Christianity should likely re-evaluate their interpretation.
      - Improvising within the key vs. playing out of tune

# Strategies for Living Under Scripture's Authority

- A *Scholarship-Informed* Reading of Scripture
  - No one should confuse their Google searches or personal reading initiatives and research with the knowledge base of a top-notch scholar—they are *worlds* apart (e.g., D.A. Carson, Greg Beale, Richard Bauckham, Kevin Vanhoozer etc.).
    - In many cases, but fewer than the above, this also applies to theologically well-educated pastors.
    - If an individual or theological community finds themselves interpreting Scripture in a way that enjoys virtually no top-notch scholarly representation, they should be extremely cautious.

# Strategies for Living Under Scripture's Authority

- *A Discussion-Based Reading of Scripture*
  - People should not seek to develop their theology in isolation only to emerge into theological discussions *defending* their views, with the now-added incentive to “not be wrong” hampering their theological development.
    - The interpretation and application of Scripture should be done *within* an interpretive community where the concrete begins to solidify only after one's understanding has been shaped by the pressures and insights of the group.
      - Ideally, views totally absent from one's regular interpretive community should also be consulted for their unique perspectives, generally through literature.

# Strategies for Living Under Scripture's Authority

- A *Privately-Studied* Reading of Scripture
  - Ps. 119; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 4:12
    - The Scriptures are to be carefully read, meditated upon, studied, prayed through and applied by individuals and smaller groups.
- A *Prayerful* Reading of Scripture
  - Even when being studied for “academic” purposes, Scripture should be read with *humble* hearts and minds dependent on the Spirit's work of illumination. We must not fall into the danger of thinking that our hermeneutics textbooks and commentaries can somehow replace the Holy Spirit.

# Defining the “Sufficiency” of Scripture

- Partim-Partim Sufficiency

- The Bible *does not contain all the information* necessary for living in complete obedience to God and must be supplemented by Sacred Tradition

- Illustration: Scripture is like a pile of bricks out of which we are going to build a house. However, not all the bricks necessary to build the house are in the pile. More bricks must be gathered to have enough to complete the house.

- Material Sufficiency

- The Bible *contains all the information* necessary for living in complete obedience to God *but* cannot be discerned accurately by individual interpreters.

- Illustration: Scripture is like a pile of bricks out of which we are going to build a house, but even though all the bricks are in the pile, we can't assemble them ourselves. We must seek instruction from a construction expert.

# Defining the “Sufficiency” of Scripture

- Formal Sufficiency

- The Bible *contains all the information* necessary for living in complete obedience to God *and* can impart this knowledge to believers earnestly seeking its truth through ordinary means.

- Illustration: Scripture is like a collection of bricks assembled in the form of a house that can be identified by even a real estate novice—there is no mistaking it for a mailbox or a wall.

- Formal sufficiency is essentially material sufficiency combined with the clarity of Scripture, which is how we will argue for the position.

# Material Sufficiency | “It’s All There”

- Ps. 119:1
  - The Psalmist implies that those who walk in God’s law will be blameless, implying that nothing necessary for salvation or godliness is missing.
    - Remember that as a doctrine, sufficiency always considers redemptive-historical context. That is, Scripture has always been sufficient to impart all knowledge necessary for living rightly before God during each stage of redemptive history.
- Deut. 4:2
  - “do not add or subtract”
- Josh. 1:8
  - Isn’t it difficult to understand how this verse could be true of God’s word to his people was incomplete at this point in redemptive history?
- Isa. 8:19-20
  - Attempting to discern how to live rightly before God by consulting authoritative “wisdom” from sources other than God’s written revelation is explicitly condemned as foolishness. The “teaching and testimony” (i.e., the Law) is sufficient.



# The Burden of Proof Coming Out of the Old Testament

- *If God's written revelation was complete and sufficient for those under the old covenant, should we expect anything different in the written revelation for those under the new covenant?*
- Matt. 4:4
  - Jesus quotes Deut. 8:3 to Satan, suggesting that what sustains one's life is not physical bread alone, but God's word. Deut. 8:6 brings clarity to "God's word" if there is any question: "So you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him."
  - While the content of God's written word expanded after Jesus said this (i.e., the New Testament), the truth didn't change as a foundational element in the thinking and life of Jesus—God's word to his people is sufficient ground for one's life to prosper before the Lord (cf. Deut. 8:7-10).

# THE “Proof Text”

- 2 Tim. 3:15-17
  - Very interestingly, the OT (“sacred writings”) is able to make one wise unto salvation *in Jesus Christ* and lead one toward embracing Jesus as the promised Messiah and King.
  - If Scripture is not sufficient and complete in content, how can it equip for every good work?
    - Hendriksen: “Paul uses the expression ‘sacred writings’ here in verse 15, but ‘all scripture’ in verse 16, for the simple reason that he wishes to draw a distinction between the Old Testament (verse 15) and *whatever* has a right to be called divinely inspired Scripture (verse 16). The latter comprises more than the former.”