

Institutes of Theology | Session 18
Bibliology: The Sufficiency of Scripture
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So when it comes to studying systematic theology, I want us to understand what's at stake. The biblical authors make clear that Christians have been charged with the duty of passing on the faith to the next generation. Now this theme can be traced all throughout Scripture. It was a crucial reality in the life of Old Testament Israel, and it is equally as crucial for us as believers under the new covenant in our Lord's church. Now in an elder pastoral context, the church leader is to pass down the body of truth revealed in Scripture first and foremost to his family, but then we are told to the congregation, to the sheep. But at the same time, Scripture is also clear that believers, even believers who aren't serving in those capacities or in those official ministry roles, are also to pass down the truth to the next generation. So all of us, without exception, according to Deuteronomy 6 and Ephesians 6, are to hand the baton of truth to those who are next in line. We do this in a number of ways, but we do this first by ensuring copies of the Bible are entrusted to those who come after us. And by the way, you can search this, but there are roughly a dozen countries around the world that ban the possession of Bibles.

And of course, we know that there are dozens of unreached people groups who have never heard about Christ and therefore don't have copies of the Scripture either. Now, later in this semester, Tom will talk about the preservation of Scripture and how God has preserved His written Word on a human level. But we play a part in guarding the explicit text of Scripture by putting forth an effort to get copies of God's Word into the hands of people around the world.

Men, we have to practically find ways to do this. And to get really tangible a practical way for us to do this here locally is to make sure and ensure that we get copies of God's Word to the next generation. You can do this for your own kids or your grandkids. Now, of course, we live in a time where there's copies of God's Word everywhere, right? We could probably do a raise of hands with how many of you guys have half a dozen or maybe even more copies of God's Word available to you. But we must consistently still put forth effort to ensure that God's physical

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Word is passed down to the next generation. But in addition to that, we also must invest in verbally explaining the teachings of Scripture and providing in written form those same teachings.

Now, this is what the church has been doing since its inception. The copying of Scripture and making it available in physical form has always been the practice of the true church. You can look back in the New Testament, and you see evidence of the copying of Scripture. In fact, you can look at Revelation chapter 2 and 3, and when the Apostle John wrote the book of Revelation, he wrote one original autograph of that book, and it was sent to the church of Ephesus, and then it was copied and went around to the other six churches, that are mentioned there in that text. So Christians understood the value of copying Scripture, translating Scripture, and getting it in the hands of God's people. But at the same time, and here's one I'm really wanting to hone in on, we're supposed to summarize the teaching of Scripture and make that available to God's people. That has also been the practice of the church since the New Testament. So after the apostles laid the foundation of the church through their preaching and teaching ministries and their writing of the New Testament, subsequent Christians not only copied the Scripture the apostles wrote, but they also began to confess verbally and record in writing summary statements or summary teachings of what the Bible plainly teaches.

I've recommended this resource to you before, but Carl Truman's book "Crisis of Confidence," he really goes into depth this reality of Christians continuing to pass on the truth of Scripture. He says these words, "What is undeniable is that Ignatius, Tertullian, and Irenaeus all indicate that the church from the earliest post apostolic times continued and developed the Pauline notion of providing clear doctrinal summaries as a means of summarizing the faith." Now Truman argues, as do many others, that the apostolic way in the New Testament was not only to pass down the written Word, but to pass down summary statements.

Turn to 2 Timothy chapter one. I want us to begin in 2 Timothy chapter 1. If you have your copy of God's Word, turn to 2 Timothy 1. Now, of course, Paul is writing to Timothy. This is one of the three pastoral epistles. So the primary emphasis and focus is on pastors passing down the word of truth to their congregations. But the wider application of that reality is that all Christians must be diligent to pass down the sound words of Scripture, which have been taught both by the

prophets of old and the Apostles in the New Testament. Look at 2 Timothy 1:13-14. Paul writes, “Retain the standard of sound words, which you have heard from me in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.” So that word “retain” is actually a command. It's an imperative, and it means to take a hold of something, to grip, to hold fast to matters of transcendent importance. Paul tells Timothy that he must grip or hold fast to the words that he has taught. The word “guard,” it's also a command. It means to protect. That word “treasure” means sound words. So what Paul is commanding Timothy here is that you must hold fast to the biblical truth, the sound words, the treasure of truth, that body of doctrine, and you must protect it at all cost. Not only be convicted by it, but you must protect it.

Now turn over one chapter to chapter two. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul writes, “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” That word “entrust,” it's a command. It means to give over. It means to give over or commend. The idea is safe keeping, to transmit an important body of doctrine. So what Paul was essentially saying to Timothy—here is that the content of Paul's teaching ministry, the teaching ministry that was authorized by Christ—Paul tells Timothy, you have to embrace it yourself, and then you pass it down to the next generation. And then you entrust that generation with embracing that same truth, and then they too are to pass it down to the next generation.

Men, I start there because tonight, as we consider the sufficiency of Scripture, we must not only come to understand, embrace, and apply this doctrine in our own lives, and that's how we'll finish up our time tonight, appropriating this great doctrine. But we need to pass it on to the people in our context and the people of the next generation. We all live in a certain context at a certain time in this world. Of course, we are unified in the fact that we are all members or regular attenders of Countryside Bible Church. But we have been entrusted by way of New Testament authors to continue to pass down the truth. Tonight, there's nothing more important for us to study as it relates to Bibliology as the sufficiency of Scripture.

So I want to begin our time in this study by looking at a classic definition of sufficiency, a classic definition of sufficiency. Now, to help us study this doctrine from every angle, I want to begin by looking at what sufficiency does not mean. What sufficiency does not mean. Well, first off, it

does not mean that all that it is in God has been made known or revealed. We have to understand that reality. When we engage with others about the sufficiency of Scripture, we first need to understand that all that is in God has not been made known. The classic text on this is Deuteronomy 29:29. Listen to this text as I read it. “The secret things belong to the Lord, our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.

Now, we're going to come back to this text later on tonight. But as Moses relays God's Word to the people, he makes clear that there is certain body of doctrine, that there is certain revelation that God has revealed, but at the same time, there is some knowledge of God that has not been revealed. Now, those words that you find there in English, “the secret things,” that means to be hidden. So when we talk about the sufficiency of Scripture, men, we recognize that there are some things that God has not revealed, but this does not tamper with the sufficiency of the Bible.

Secondly, sufficiency does not mean that all of Christ's works have been made known. Let's turn to the New Testament. Let's go to the Gospel of John. Turn to John chapter 20. So we recognize that the Gospels do not record everything about the life ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is made crystal clear at the end of the Gospel of John and what we would call the epilogue. It's the final conclusion of this great Gospel. But if you look at John 20:30, John says, “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book. But these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”

Now, as I mentioned, this verse and really verse 31, they provide a summary statement of the book of John. But John tells us that he intentionally selected certain signs or certain miracles to weave into his story, to demonstrate to us that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that salvation only comes through Him. But John also tells us in this conclusion, there are things that Jesus did which are not written down in this book. Now, he's specifically referring to the Gospel, but the wider principle is, is that the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, do not reveal for us all that Christ did. In fact, turn over just one chapter in John 21. Look at verse 25. The Gospel of John goes on to say, “And there are also many other things which Jesus did,

which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.”

Number three, sufficiency does not mean that all of the apostles' works have been made known. That all of the apostles' works have been made known. There's a few texts that we could look at, but if you think with me and consider 2 Corinthians 12, remember when Paul was caught up to heaven in a unique experience there, in 2 Corinthians 12, we're told that Paul “was caught up into paradise, and he heard inexpressible words, which man was not permitted to speak.” Which man was not permitted to speak. So the apostle Paul had some supernatural experience in which he was not able to speak about it. He was not able to reveal what had happened. In Revelation 10:4, the apostle John is told to seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them. So for 22 chapters, the apostle John lays out, well, at least in chapters 1 through 3 are historical realities, but in 4 through 22, he lays out future realities. But in Revelation 10, John is told don't write these things down. You saw certain things, don't write them down. They do not need to be revealed. Again, this does not affect sufficiency.

Number four, that the Bible explicitly addresses all situations and activities. That's not what sufficiency means. We understand this. The fact is the Bible doesn't address every single situation. The Bible gives no record for how, by way of example, to change the oil in your truck. The Bible doesn't give explicit tips on gaining muscular strength or losing body fat. I can't give you a chapter verse on that. But we understand this reality. The Bible doesn't speak to all situations and activities at all times.

I like how Joel Beeke puts it in his “Reformed Systematic Theology.” He says, the Bible does not claim to be a comprehensive guide to astronomy, geology, nutrition, warfare, mechanics, business, history, medicine, public speaking, sports, politics, or a host of other topics.” He goes on to say, “However, since all human activities should aim at the glory of God, the Bible is a sufficient guide for pleasing Him in every facet of life.” Right? Think about the many activities that you participated in today. Most likely, the Bible doesn't directly speak or explicitly speak to that activity. But you can use principles like 1 Corinthians 10 to participate or engage in that activity for the glory of God. So the Bible doesn't explicitly address every single situation or activity. John Frame, he puts it this way, “Sufficiency is not sufficiency of specific information,

but sufficiency of divine words. Scripture has all the divine words that the plumber needs and all the divine words that the theologian needs.” So you see the point there. The doctor needs more information to do his job, but he doesn't need more divine words or content to do his job. The Bible can direct and guide him how to perform that task for God's glory.

Number five in our list. Sufficiency does not mean that all secular resources must be rejected. By way of example from Beeke's quote above, if you are interested in nutrition and exercise, feel free to read a book or a blog about those things. If you are a history buff, read books about history. If you want to learn how to change the oil in your car, watch a YouTube video. Sufficiency doesn't mean that you cannot engage in other material. Sufficiency does demand that you do engage with that material through a biblical lens or a biblical worldview. And I would say examining everything through a biblical telescope should be standard operation for us as Christians. Our Christianity, our fidelity to God and His Word, doesn't stop at the door on Sunday mornings, and it doesn't end tonight at 9 p.m. We, brothers, don't disengage from biblical thought. The sufficiency of Scripture is always our guide, no matter what we are engaging with.

Number six, sufficiency does not mean that all extra biblical Christian resources must be rejected. That's not what we're talking about when we look at the sufficiency of the Bible. Two thousand years of church history has produced an innumerable amount of material from pastors, theologians, scholars, professors, teachers, in the forms of creeds, confessions, commentaries, and so forth. But here's the key. All of it sits subservient or subordinate to the Scriptures. That is the rightful standard biblical place for anything that is not God-breathed. But for 2,000 years, the Holy Spirit has illumined the Scripture to the minds of His people.

And for centuries, faithful Christians have tried to explain the Word of God. And such explanations we have access to in written form, both in print and digital, and audio form. So we ought to invest our time in accessing those resources. This is not an attack on the sufficiency of Scripture. And we have to come to understand this reality. Now, if you have a book at your house, or you have an audio book on your phone, I mean, we have a bookstore here on campus that has over 2,000 different books. So that tells me and us together that we are okay with reading books that help us understand the truth of God's Word. But we must never let those

resources in any way, shape, or form rise above what God has given us in His inspired, inerrant Word.

I think Robert Lethem, he just puts this beautifully. He says, “Tradition, viewed as the past teaching of the church and its confessions, creeds, and representative theologians, effectively represents the sum total of the accumulated biblical exegesis of the Christian church.” Now this is key. “It is not on a par with Scripture. Some of it may even mislead us, but we neglect it at our peril and use it to our great advantage.” So we understand what he's saying there. There is a bank, a collection of 2,000 years of spirit-illuminated resources, not spirit-inspired, that Scripture, but spirit-illuminated resources that we should access. If it leads us away from the Scripture, throw it out, right? How many times, maybe, have you read a book, and a portion of it is just completely unbiblical? Throw it out. I'm not saying you have to throw out the literal book. I'm saying throw out what was said. We neglected at our peril, Lethem says, and use it to our great advantage. J.I. Packer, he says, “For the creeds, like the decisions of councils, popes, and individual churches, are the work of sinful men, to whom no personal infallibility was ever promised. Therefore, they must be verified by appeal to what homilists call God's infallible Word.”

Men, we just have to be Bereans when it comes to reading anything outside of Scripture. We have to apply Act 17 to our own lives. If you're reading Biblical doctrine by John MacArthur, be a Berean. Or any other systematic theology that you want to throw in the mix there. Be a Berean. Does it stand next to the Word of God? Surely not in authority because it sits subservient to it. But does what the content, what it teaches, does it line up with Scripture? Then that's okay. So the issue isn't tradition, but rather how we view it and where we would hold it.

Now, let's step back for a moment and just think about the 16th century reformation. Okay, when people try to summarize, you know, what was the primary or the main issue of the reformation, you could go a few different angles. Was the issue an issue of worship? Absolutely, there was a worship problem. Was the issue justification by faith alone? Yeah, that was an issue because the, you know, prevailing teaching at that time was justification by faith and works. But one of the other issues that you find during the time of the reformation was how to view tradition, how to view tradition.

The Roman Catholic Church had placed tradition at least equal to Scripture and in many cases above Scripture. So Luther and Calvin and Zwingli and Melancthon and those guys, they came in and said, “No! Sola scriptura.” It is Scripture alone and anything from church tradition sits below the Scripture. Many of you men, if you read the Institutes of the Christian Religion by John Calvin over the summer, how many times does he quote from church history? I don't know the exact number, but he quotes from it a lot. But the idea is church tradition is good when it sits below the Bible. And that was one of the issues during the time of the Reformation. Luther and Calvin and company argued for it to be under the Bible.

So next, let's consider now that we understand what sufficiency does not mean. Let's look at what sufficiency means. Now, perhaps the best definition of sufficiency of Scripture is found in the Westminster Confession of Faith, written by over 100 Puritan men in 1649. So in the post-Reformation area that we were just talking about, churches began to formalize in writing their beliefs about the core doctrines of the Christian faith. You realize back throughout church history, most of the church creeds in the early first centuries of the church, those were written in response to heresies that were permeating the ancient world. When you get to the time of the 1500s and the 1600s, you see several confessions, these church documents that were written by God's people. And they wrote those documents to help formalize and standardize what they believed. Since so many of those things had been obscured by the Roman Catholic Church in the centuries before, it was crucial that Christians come together and formalize what they believe that the Scripture taught. So when we talk about the Westminster Confession of Faith, that's exactly what that document is. So you can think about the Westminster Confession of Faith. You can think about the larger catechism or even the shorter catechism. These were helpful documents that Christians put together to help organize what they believe to be true about the Bible.

So in the Westminster Confession of Faith, they lay out a wonderful definition for the sufficiency of Scripture. And honestly, I can't put together a better one, so we'll just stick with this one and talk about this to get us going in terms of definitions. So what did these men write? Well, here's what they wrote about the sufficiency of Scripture. And we're going to take this apart into four different segments here, but I want you to see the whole thing up front. Here's what they write.

The whole council of God, which is the entire Bible, 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.

Now, let's begin to take this definition apart as we sort of develop what the sufficiency of Scripture is.

So here's the first part of the definition. Let me look at it or read it for us again. "The whole council of God, concerning all things necessary for God's own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life." So what these men wrote and what they're trying to describe here is the sufficiency of Scripture. The whole council of God simply means what we find in Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, everything that God determined to reveal. It contains all things necessary to promote God's glory and to save mankind from their sins and to sanctify them from glory to glory into the image of Christ. That's what they're arguing for here. The Bible tells us about the glory of the triune God and how man's soul can be saved. And not just that, how he can be made into the image of Christ.

Francis Turretin, he writes, "The question of sufficiency relates only to things necessary to salvation, whether they belong to faith or to practice, whether all these things are so contained in the Scriptures that they can be a total and adequate rule of faith and practice." Turretin goes on to put this in question form. He says, and we need to ask ourselves this tonight, is the Scripture a complete and adequate rule of faith and practice, or only a partial and inadequate rule? Which one is it? That's what he's asking. Well, church history, as we'll see later, attest to the fact that God has given everything that we need in His Word for life and godliness. That's what these men get at when they say that the whole council of God, concerning all things necessary for God's own glory and man's salvation, faith, and life is found in the Word of God. Scripture is sufficient.

Let's look at the second part of this definition. It reads this way. "[It's] either expressly set down in Scripture or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture." So all that is necessary for life and godliness is contained in the Bible. And this is what we have to see. It is

either explicitly stated or can be reasonably deduced from the biblical text. It can be reasonably deduced from the biblical text.

John Brown of Haddington, a Scottish pastor in the 18th century, watch how he describes this. He says, “The Scriptures, including the necessary consequences of their express words, are a perfect and complete rule of our faith and practice, informing us of everything which we ought to believe or do in order to our entrance into the glorified state.” Now, I think we understand the idea of what was expressly set down, what is explicitly stated. It's really helpful when we're working through biblical doctrines or systematic theology or whatever sort of biblical study. It's really helpful when you can just give a specific chapter verse. This is exactly what the Bible says. And that's great. And we ought to know those Scriptures and those passages that are connected to the fundamentals of the Christian faith. But at the same time, the sufficiency of Scripture allows for us to make reasonable deductions, to give explanations of those texts as long as they stay faithful to the meaning of that text.

We've all done this at some point, right? If you've shared the Gospel with someone, you've no doubt shared explicit texts with them. In our evangelism class that we offer two times a year here, that's what we do. We work through explicit texts to help you organize your thoughts in the Scriptures to take people down the Gospel road. But at the same time, there's also an expansion of those truths when you give an explanation of it to the person whom you're speaking with. That's what they're getting at with the definition here.

Now, there's some great examples of this in the book of Acts. So let's turn to Acts chapter 17. So what does it mean to make reasonable deductions? Well, we get a great example of this from the apostle Paul's ministry in the book of Acts. Acts 17 is where I want us to turn. In Acts 17, Paul is in Thessalonica, and as was his custom, he would preach the Scriptures, but he would not only give his audience explicit texts, he would reason with them from the Scripture.

Look at Acts 17:2. And according to Paul's custom, so this is what he did all the time. “According to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths, reasoned with them from the Scriptures.” That word “reasoned.” It's where we get our English word “dialogue.” He dialogued with them. He engaged in speech. He interchanged with them. He conversed, discussed, and argued from the text of Scripture. So he worked from explicit text in the Old

Testament, but then he reasoned with people. He argued with people. He discussed those texts. Turn over one chapter to chapter 18. Paul is now in Corinth, chapter 18:4. And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade the Jews and Greeks. Again, the same pattern, the same approach. He's going to the synagogue. He's going on the Sabbath day. He's opening up the Old Testament Scripture that he would have no doubtedly had. And then he is reasoning from those texts.

Turn over to chapter 19. So Paul's gone from Thessalonica to Corinth. Now in chapter 19, he's in Ephesus, verse 8. And Paul entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months. What did he do for those three months? Reasoning. Same Greek word. And persuading them about the kingdom of God. That word “persuade” means to convince. So when we're talking about the sufficiency of Scripture, you can use explicit texts. But at the same time, sufficiency also demands that you give explanation to those texts. And if you explain that text correctly, you still fall under the bounds of the sufficiency of Scripture.

Let's look at one last reference. Turn to Acts 28. Acts 28. At the end of the book of Acts, Paul has finally made his way to Rome. This is fulfillment of Acts 1 that said the Gospel would make it to the ends of the earth. When you get to Acts 28, the Gospel has done exactly that. The Gospel makes it to Rome. Acts 28:23. “When they had set a day for Paul [he's on house arrest], they came to him at his lodging in a large number. And he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus from both the law of Moses and from the prophets, from morning until evening.” This guy was relentless. The word “explaining” means to convey information carefully. “Solemnly testifying” here means to make a declaration about the truth, to testify, to bear witness. That word actually is where we get our English word, martyr. To be martyred means to be a witness. Paul was being a witness testifying of the truth.

Now, I think it's interesting here, if you're still there in Acts chapter 28, notice in verses 25 through 27 that in those texts, Paul is actually directly quoting Isaiah 6 verses 9 and 10. So he's operating by explicit texts. And then after he quotes those texts, he then explains what that passage means and what can be deduced from it. That's verse 28, let it be known to you. So he gives an explicit text, then he applies that. Look down at verse 30. How long did Paul keep doing

this? Then Paul dwelt two whole years in this rented house, and he just kept verse 31, preaching the kingdom of God. And this wasn't just an Apostle Paul thing. Jesus did this for the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. In fact, Luke 24:27 says, then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, Jesus explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. So Jesus had no problem with identifying explicit texts from the law, the prophets, and the Psalms. And then he explained, or drew out, the meaning of those texts and what could be reasonably deduced from them. That should be our model as it relates to the sufficiency of Scripture.

So let's look at the third component now of the Westminster definition. "Unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the spirit or traditions of men." Now this is very critical. The sufficiency of Scripture recognizes that nothing should be added to or taken away from the 66 books of the Bible. The men who wrote this confession and the Christians before them understood that only the 66 books of the Bible, that particular content, only that content is considered the sufficiency of Scripture, or at least plays into the category of sufficiency. In addition to that, sufficiency also demands that no human traditions be elevated to what has been written in the Bible. Nothing should be added; nothing should be taken away.

Herman Bavinck, a Dutch reformer, listen to what he says when he's talking about the sufficiency of Scripture. He says, "These Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments constitute the foundation of prophets and apostles on which all Christian churches in fellowship with each other take their stand or claim to take their stand. In their official confessions, all churches have acknowledged the divine authority of those Scriptures and have appropriated them as a reliable rule of faith and life. There has never been a difference or conflict about this point of dogma in the Christian churches." We'll talk more about this later, but there is a long-standing tradition that sits below Scripture that argues for the sufficiency of the Bible. There, Bavinck, he just calls it, that the Bible is a reliable rule of faith and life.

So everybody recognizes—except for the Roman Catholic Church apparently—that only the 66 books of the Bible are the divine-inspired words of God, and only those books are included in this discussion or this equation. Let's look at the fourth and final part of this definition. Then we'll look at some biblical examples.

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. So here's what we're saying. The total content of Scripture is sufficient, yet we recognize that we must have the third member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit of God, to be our teacher and guide. This is crucial. We understand that the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Old and New Testament. We aren't asking for that ministry of the Holy Spirit, but we are asking for the illumination of the Spirit to understand what has been revealed. So the Scripture, that content, that body of doctrine is sufficient, but we desperately need the Spirit of God to help us understand those realities. That's why in 1 Corinthians 2, Paul says that the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God. The unbeliever cannot understand God's Word. Why? Because he's spiritually dead. So the sufficiency of Scripture doesn't downplay the work of the Holy Spirit. Rather, it promotes the work of the Holy Spirit. You have to have the Spirit of God to know, understand, embrace, and to live the Scriptures. So that is a classic definition of the sufficiency of Scripture.

Let's next look at the biblical articulation of sufficiency. So we've really considered what sufficiency isn't. Then we have considered what it is. Now we need to invest time in working through biblical text to see if this is what the Bible really teaches about itself. So how are we going to do this? We're going to look at this in two categories. The first category I want us to look at is progressive revelation and sufficiency. Progressive revelation and sufficiency. You can think of it this way. Is the Bible just now sufficient? In other words, when the Apostle John wrote the Book of Revelation towards the end of the first century, when he put his pen down and completed that work, did that mean that the Bible just now became sufficient? Or would we argue that God's revelation has always been sufficient, even though it has been revealed progressively? That's what I want to look at in this first point, the progressive revelation of Scripture.

Now, beginning with creation in Genesis 1, God has progressively revealed Himself to particular people at particular times. And that particular revelation was sufficient for those particular people at that particular time. So I'm not talking about general revelation. Remember, several weeks ago, I think that was back in August, Tom spoke on general revelation and special revelation. So I am not right now talking about general revelation. I'm talking about special revelation, God specifically revealing Himself to particular people at a particular time. So what we're saying here

is that God didn't reveal Himself all at once but progressively made Himself known. And in this process, the recipients of the revelation were adequately equipped with sufficient revelation for that particular time. Let me say that again. God didn't reveal Himself all at once but progressively made Himself known. And in this process, the recipients of that revelation were adequately equipped with sufficient revelation for that particular time. So the sufficiency of Scripture didn't begin once all of the Bible had been written. The idea is that God's giving of revelation was sufficient, listen, at every point of redemption.

Remember, God communicated through audible voice, the angel of the Lord, theophanies, visions, dreams, through the writings of the prophets. This is to say that God's revelation to Noah or Abraham or Joseph or any other Old Testament figure, whenever they received that revelation, that revelation was sufficient for that time. Now, how do we know that? We're going to look at several examples here. Let's first turn to Genesis chapter one, and I want us to consider the creation mandate.

So as we continue to look at progressive revelation and sufficiency, I want us to start by looking at the creation mandate in Genesis one and two. On the sixth day of creation, God creates mankind in His image and likeness, and then God, operating as the King of the universe, He sets mankind out to be His representatives. It's essentially what it means to be made in the image and likeness of God. God has created the world; He has placed us here to be His representatives.

Look at verse 28 of Genesis 1. God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, rule over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth. So a familiar text, but I want you to think of this in light of progressive revelation. God tells them to be fruitful and multiply. He tells them to fill the earth. He tells them to subdue and reign over the earth and to extend their power over the animal kingdom. Jump down to verse 29 and verse 30. God says, look, I've given you every plant. I've given you every tree, verse 30. I've given you every beast of the earth, every bird of the sky, everything that moves. I've given you every green plant for food. So God extends their rule over the plant kingdom there in those texts as well as the animal kingdom. Turn over to chapter 2. When you get to chapter 2 in verses 15 through 17, God tells Adam, and you can see this here in verse 15, the Lord God took the man, put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it.

So He gave him specific instructions. Cultivate it, keep it. Then verse 16, God told him, look, from any tree of the garden, you may freely eat. But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, or you will die. So God places Adam in the garden of Eden and tells him he can eat there. He can eat these things, but not this.

Then God tells Adam to exercise his rule over the animals by naming them all. Then God tells him it's not good for him to be alone, but he needs a helper. He creates Eve, and the two eventually become one. But what I want you to see, men, is that the revelation that God had given Adam and Eve was sufficient to carry out their tasks of glorifying Him. They didn't lack information. More theologically, they didn't lack revelation. God's Word was sufficient for them in those early days.

Now turn over to Genesis 4. Let's look at a second example of progressive revelation. The sacrifices of Abel and Cain. The sacrifices of Abel and Cain. Now Genesis 4 picks up the Genesis narrative with the focus on Adam and Eve's two sons, Abel and Cain. Now because the Old Testament hadn't been written yet, what God had revealed to Adam and Eve was certainly passed down to their children through oral tradition. In other words, Adam and Eve's children would have understood the events that transpired in Genesis 1 through 3. Oral tradition in the ancient world was imperative. Stories would have been communicated over and over, so the listeners would commit them to memory. That's really not the case today. Oral tradition isn't as compelling for us today in our context for obvious reasons. But my point is, is that what God had revealed would have been passed down orally from generation to generation.

Now, when you get to Genesis 4, this particular story begins with both Abel and Cain bringing offerings to the Lord. Now, if you think what's happened here in Genesis 1 through 3, there hasn't been any discussion about offerings or sacrifices. Of course, we know that God killed an animal there in Genesis 3, took the skins, covered Adam and Eve in those realities, but there's no explicit Levitical sacrificial system that's been developed yet. But here in Genesis 4, Cain and Abel are making sacrifices and offerings into the Lord. Why were they doing this? Who told them to do this? Well, to get straight to the point, the Bible doesn't explicitly tell us, but either God directly told them, or Adam and Eve taught them how God was to be worshiped. But what I want you to see here is God's response to Abel and Cain's offering. Look at verses 4 and 5. "Abel on his part

also brought the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering, but for Cain and for his offering, He had no regard.” So at some point, God had revealed what was required. So what we are arguing for is that Cain and Abel had sufficient revelation to be able to perform not only their duties unto the Lord, but to even sacrifice and bring an offering as worship unto the Lord. They weren't lacking in the details, right? What God had revealed was sufficient.

Let's look at a third example. The secret and revealed things that we find in Deuteronomy 29. Turn there with me. Turn to Deuteronomy 29. Now again, I'm just pulling out sort of some representative examples here. You probably have other examples coming to your mind. There are plenty that we could discuss. But in this third one, we've already looked at this verse. I want us to understand that there are some things that God has revealed and some things that He has not. Look at Deuteronomy 29:29. Let's read this text again. “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.” Now, the context of this verse comes on the plains of Moab, just outside the promised land. Moses has been leading the people for 40 years, and they are on the verge of entering the land that was promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The leadership baton is about to be passed to Joshua. But God tells Moses, who will in turn tell the nation of Israel, that what has been revealed in the law belongs to them as a covenant people, and not just that present generation, but the generations to come. In other words, what God revealed to Moses and the nation, which was ultimately written down by Moses, was sufficient for the people as they were making their way into the promised land and would be sufficient for the next generation.

In fact, look down at Chapter 30, verses 11 through 14. Chapter 30, verse 11, Moses goes on to say, “For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach.” In other words, what has been commanded in God's Word is clear, the perspicuity of Scripture. Look at verse 12. “It is not in heaven that you should say, ‘Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it.’ Nor is it beyond the sea.” In other words, you don't need someone to ascend to the heights of heaven to beg for and hopefully find wisdom for life. You don't need the philosophy of the Canaanites to put it into context. God says, what I have given to you in the law is sufficient for you in the plan that I have promised to you. Notice verse 14. “But the Word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you

may observe it.” You see, the problem with the nation of Israel, in that narrative context, the problem wasn't that they didn't have sufficient revelation. God gave them everything they needed for their travels to the promised land. Their problem was they disobeyed it. And is that not one of the Apostle Paul's points in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, when he says, look, these things were written as examples? Notice all throughout Scripture, there's never an argument, “Oh, You just didn't give us enough revelation, God. We just need a little bit more, and we wouldn't have built that golden calf.” The sufficiency of revelation was never an issue.

So let me summarize it this way. Throughout redemptive history, God's progressive revelation has always been sufficient for particular people at a particular time. By way of one more example, take the Book of Ecclesiastes, for example. King Solomon is giving us an optimistic view of how to live life through a biblical lens, how to live under God's standards in a fallen world. And when you get to the end of that letter, what does he say? He ultimately says, here's how you sum up life. It's not about the stuff. It's about fearing God and doing what? Keeping His commands. You see, Solomon came to realize that the Scripture was sufficient, and all this other stuff that he had been searching for to find pleasure and happiness was all vain. It was all vanity. He understood the sufficiency of the Bible.

And before we shift gears into talking about our next points under the articulation of sufficiency, I want us to think through just one more example of progressive revelation and sufficiency. Just thinking in terms of the Book of Psalms, right? Psalms, the first psalm, it talks about how the blessed man, he delights in the law of Yahweh. “He delights in the law of Yahweh.” So that opening psalm describes the reality that those who are God's people, those who are truly of the people of God, their delight is in the law of God. And the psalmist had written that, and the Old Testament at that time wasn't complete.

Of course, the New Testament wasn't there yet, right? So what I want you to see from just another example is that the idea of progressive revelation being sufficient was even affirmed by the psalmist. That opening psalm, which is really the key to the rest of the psalms, the believer delights in God's law. And there was perhaps maybe only referring to just the first handful of books of the Old Testament. Okay, so that's the progressive revelation as it relates to sufficiency. Let's next look at the completed revelation and sufficiency.

So here we're not looking at sufficiency as a progression. We've done that briefly. Now I want us to consider completed revelation in Scripture. So have in your mind here the sufficiency of Scripture as it relates to the final form of the Bible, all 66 books. And there, I'm also, well, sometimes we'll refer to that, just the content of the 66 books. And we'll talk about this in November and December when we meet together again. But if you look at, say, the English Old Testament and the English New Testament, the English Old Testament has 39 books. But if you look at the Hebrew Bible, which is the same content as the English Old Testament, that's divided into 24 books. Okay? And that's just because the divisions are different, but the content is the same. So we're looking at completed revelation. We're talking about the content of the 66 books of the Bible that are in your Bible.

So let's first begin by looking at the closed canon of Scripture. The closed canon of Scripture. We argue in the Protestant tradition that the 66 books, the content of the Bible, are the inspired Word of God. Our conviction is that only those 66 books are the inspired Word of God. Therefore, it is only those 66 books that we include when we talk about sufficiency. So the question at this point is, do we have the right books? Well, the answer, of course, is yes. And Pastor Tom will develop the canon or rule of Scripture, as it's called, in his November session here in Institutes. But for now, I want us to understand that Scripture itself has set boundaries for what books or content can be recognized as Scripture. And it is only those books, again, like we said, that are sufficient.

The Old Testament Revelation could only be written by prophets, men that were called to that particular office. Deuteronomy 13, Deuteronomy 18, classic text that defend the criteria for an Old Testament prophet. New Testament revelation could only be written by the apostles or their close associates. Jesus authorized, He pre-authenticated the apostles, to write down His words. So both the Old and New Testaments make sweeping prohibitions about adding to or taking away from the inspired writings of the prophets and the inspired writings of the apostles. So you've got to think in those categories. The Old Testament, written by prophets. The New Testament, written by the apostles and their associates. In both cases, there are prohibitions that Scripture lays out that warn of adding to or taking away from the writings of those particular men. So turn to Deuteronomy 4. We're going to look at just a couple of examples, and I don't want to spend a lot of time here, because like I said, we're going to do this more in November.

But we need to see these prohibitions. For the Old Testament, in the prophetic office, writing the inspired Word, Deuteronomy 4:2 tells us, “You shall not add to the Word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you.” So God says to Moses and the nation of Israel, do not add to My revealed words. God also says to the same group, don't subtract from My revealed words. Now, don't miss the theological implications here. God is not, and hear me on this, God is not prohibiting the recording of further revelation. For example, maybe Joshua we could use. But rather, God is saying, only My words can be added to My words. So God is saying, don't add or subtract. If you aren't a prophet and you're not writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, you cannot add to My Word. But if you have been appointed by me and you meet the criteria, you can add to My Word. I mean, that was in Deuteronomy 4. Well, Joshua wrote the book of Joshua. He's the next generation. The baton was handed from Moses to Joshua, So Joshua is now authorized to be able to record God's divine words. So he doesn't break the prohibition in Deuteronomy 4:2. That prohibition is for anybody that is not authorized. Joshua, by way of example, he was authorized, and so were the other writing prophets in the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 4 allows later prophets of God to add to Scripture, but it does not allow non-prophetic figures to do so. So that's an Old Testament prohibition.

Turn to the last chapter in your Bible, Revelation 22. Turn to Revelation 22. So now let's think in terms of the New Testament. So the Book of Revelation is the last book in our Bibles. It was also the last book written chronologically by the Apostle John around AD95. But at the end of this book, we have a prohibition that is likened to Deuteronomy 4:2. Look at Revelation 22:18-19. I testify to everyone who hears the words of this prophecy of this book, if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book. And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city which are written in this book. Now again, that should sound familiar because it's very similar to Deuteronomy 4:2. Again, we find another sweeping prohibition. Only apostolic-inspired figures are able to record divine revelation in terms of the New Testament. So now that we have a closed canon of Scripture, we are saying that only these books, and I've repeated this several times because I really want us to hone in on this, only these books can enter into the sufficiency talk, the sufficiency discussion.

Well, Helmus Brackel, 17th century Netherlands theologian, watch what he says. "If one book of Scripture were to be lost, part of this rule would be missing and therefore would not be perfect. One book or several together, for example, the books of Moses or the Gospels, perfectly contain the complete rule for faith and practice." So it's crucial that we understand this reality. When the book of Leviticus was written and it was given to the nation of Israel, that book was complete and it was sufficient in and of itself. But as additional books were written by the prophets, those books that were later added to as divine revelation, they were considered sufficient. The Old Testament canon was closed. There was 400 years of silence between the last writing prophet Malachi and the coming of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Then when you get to the New Testament, as each one of those books were written in their context, they were sufficient. And then once John wrote the book of Revelation, the New Testament canon was complete. 66 books are in their final form. All of that content has been delivered by the inspiration of God.

That gives us the sufficient Word of God. The canon is closed, and that's crucial, men. That's why we don't add to the canon any man-made traditions, because we don't fit the apostolic and prophetic criteria. At the same time, we don't add or expect any new revelation to be given by God. We operate only within the canon of Scripture. Again, the idea of the tradition world and Roman Catholicism, and then the idea of new revelation and experience in your charismatic, Pentecostal, Assembly of God movements, right? Both of those are attacks on the sufficiency of Scripture.

So that's the closed canon of Scripture. Now, let's look at the perfection of Scripture. So as we think about the totality of the revelation we have and its sufficiency, I want us to see by way of three examples the perfection of Scripture. Let's turn to Psalm 19. This is where I want to begin. Turn to Psalm 19. Scripture is perfect and complete in every way, and it is sufficient for all of life and godliness. Now Psalm 19, the first half of that psalm deals with general revelation that God has made Himself known to all men at all times through creation. That's the point in the first half of the psalm. Then when you get to verse seven, the psalmist switches from general revelation to now talk about specific or special revelation. It describes God's special revelation through His Word, what God has explicitly written about Himself in a book. But then it also describes the sufficiency of the Bible.

Let's read the text together. Let's begin in verse seven.

The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul;
The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.
The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.
The commandment of the Lord, is pure, enlightening the eyes.
The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever.
The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether.
They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold.
Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.
Moreover, by them your servant is warned, and keeping them, there is great reward.

Now these verses record a powerful explanation of the sufficiency of the Bible, that God in His Word has revealed to us all we need to glorify Him, to be redeemed from our sins, and to be likened unto our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Here's how Pastor Tom defines this portion of Psalm 19. He says, "Scripture alone is God's perfect, complete, and transforming revelation of Himself. In these verses, David attempts to spell out in a comprehensive way what God's Word is and what it accomplishes in our lives. Here, we learn its unique character, and we learn its profound benefits."

Now, if you just take your eyes back over Psalm 19 with me, if you look at verses seven, eight, and nine, there is a hyper focus on God's Word. And God's Word is described with several synonyms. Look at it with me. Verse seven, law. Verse seven, testimony. Verse eight, precepts. Verse eight, commandment. Verse nine, fear. And verse nine, judgments. These synonyms describe God's inerrant, sufficient Word from various angles. And the psalmist surely has in mind God's written law given at Sinai, but more broadly, this text can be applied to all of the Scripture.

Now, I want to consider eight powerful truths this psalm gives about the sufficiency of God's Word. And we're just going to go through these rapid fire here. So eight truths that we find in this psalm, in this particular section, about the sufficiency of God's Word.

The first truth we find is that Scripture is perfect. It is able to save your soul. That's verse 7a. It says, the law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul. This means that Scripture is genuine. It's pure. It's flawless. It's sound. What does it mean to restore your soul? That is salvation. God's

Word is able to save your soul. Then if you are in Christ, which most of us are tonight, you know it is through the Word of God and the power of the Spirit of God that you were brought to God. He drew you to Himself through His powerful Word. That's what the psalmist says that God's Word, the law, it's perfect. It can save your soul.

Second truth we find here is that Scripture is trustworthy. It is able to make you wise. Scripture is trustworthy. It's able to make you wise. God's testimony, it's simple. It's sure. It's trustworthy. It's able to train you in wisdom and righteousness and to help you participate as a people of God. God's testimony, God's Word, it will make you wise. And the idea is “spiritually skilled.” You can think of the skills that you have acquired throughout your lifetime. What we're told here in Psalm 19 is that God's Word will give you spiritual skills. It will equip you.

A third truth that we find is that Scripture is right. It is able to bring you joy. We see that in verse 8. “The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.” The idea behind precepts is statutes, that which governs your duties and activities unto the Lord. Have you experienced this before, men? When you are being obedient to God's Word, when you are walking in the paths that He's laid out in the text of Scripture, you are able to rejoice.

A fourth truth that we find is that Scripture is clear. It's able to direct your path. Verse eight, “The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.” God's entire law is pure. To put it in Levitical sacrificial terms, God's law is without blemish. It's without spot. It's not tainted. It's not sick. It's not lame. It's not blind. It's pure. And such purity gives you 2020 spiritual vision. You are no longer seeing dimly through or through fog, but your eyes have been opened up. Your eyes have been enlightened. Men, think of when you were first converted in comparison to now, and the diligence that you've had in studying God's Word. How much more have your eyes, the eyes of your heart been opened to the truth and reality of this life? Scripture is clear. It's able to direct your path. It enlightens your eyes. It opens up this world to see it through God's perspective.

Number five, Scripture is also clean. It's able to address you or speak to you at any time. The law, it produces reverence. It produces awe. It's clean. It's not corrupt. It has no decay. It's holy. It's right. And it's good. And what I love about verse nine, it says that God's law, it endures forever. Isn't that amazing? I mean, we're sitting here tonight in 2025, studying Psalm 19, what

believers have been doing for centuries. And what was true then is equally true now. God's Word endures forever. Elsewhere in the psalm, look, it tells us that heaven and earth will pass away, but God's Word will stand and endure forever.

A sixth truth that we find in Psalm 19 is that Scripture is true. The judgments of the Lord are true. That's verse nine. They are righteous all together. The idea is that the Bible is reliable. It is sure. God's Word is righteous. It's always good. It's always just.

Number seven, Scripture is desirable. Scripture is desirable. It's not bland. It's not mundane. It's not bitter. Verse 10 tells us that Scripture, God's law, His Word, it's more desirable than gold, than much fine gold. It's also sweeter than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Nothing is more precious, according to the psalmist, than God's Word. Nothing is more sweet than God's Word. Brothers, we are to desire God's Word. In fact, that word "desire" that you see there in verse 10, other forms of this word mean "to treasure." Do you treasure God's all-sufficient Word? If we are going to be like the psalmist, we must treasure it.

A final truth that we see here is that Scripture is rewarding. "Moreover, by them your servant is warned, in keeping them, there is great reward." The great reward of keeping the law of God or Scripture is the fact that we come to know God, to praise God, to worship God, and we set our lives on a trajectory that is wholly pleasing to God. This psalm not only magnifies the sufficiency of Scripture, but it calls us in prayer and song to daily honor, exult and worship our great God.

Men, the Scriptures are sufficient for us to do those things. They weren't lacking during the psalmist's time. The Scripture was sufficient then, and the Scripture is sufficient for us today.

Well, second text that we consider as it relates to the perfection of Scripture, that it is perfect, that it is sufficient, is 2 Timothy 3:15-17. So take your copy of God's Word and turn there with me. Second Timothy 3:15-17. Now this is a familiar text. Whenever you study bibliology as it relates to systematic theology, all systematic theologies are going to go here. This is a foundational text. You know this, you're familiar with it, but it's helpful again to come back to it, even though it's fundamental, but to come back to it and see how it speaks to sufficiency. 2 Timothy 3 verses 15 through 17. Let me just set it before your eyes, and then we'll look at just two categories of truth here.

Verse 15, “and that from childhood,” again, this is Paul writing to Timothy, “and that from childhood, you have known the sacred writings,” that's the Scripture, “which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God, and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” Again, think of it in terms of sufficiency here.

These verses lay out two crucial truths as it relates to sufficiency. The first one that I want us to think through here is that Scripture is sufficient to save. So what you find here in verses 15 through 17, Paul says that Scripture is sufficient to save a person's soul. How do we know that? Verse 15: “and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom.”

So what are the Scriptures able to do? Give you insight that does what? Leads you to salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus. So Scripture is sufficient to save you. Verse 15. But Scripture is also sufficient to sanctify you. Sanctify you. So now let's look at the heart of this text, verse 16, probably the most familiar portion of it to you. So Scripture is sufficient to sanctify you.

Notice, why is Scripture able to sanctify you? Well, look, verse 16 says Scripture is God-breathed. Scripture is God-breathed. In Paul's mind, he's talking about the Old and New Testament because in Paul's writings, he often quotes from the Old Testament, but he also quotes from the New Testament. In 1st Timothy 5, the Apostle Paul quotes the Gospel of Luke. So when Paul's writing the Pastoral Epistles, the Gospel of Luke was already in circulation. Paul quotes from that Gospel, and he equates it with Scripture. So when Paul says Scripture is God-breathed, he is giving us both the Old and New Testament, or the Old with what was currently being written by the Apostles. Notice what he says, verse 16. All Scripture is God-breathed. Scripture is profitable. It's useful for teaching. Scripture is profitable for reproof, rebuke. It's profitable for correction or improvement. Verse 16, it's profitable for training in righteousness.

Now look at verse 17. “So that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” The man of God, men, that is us. If you are in Christ, that's you. You are converted. You have believed the Gospel of Jesus Christ. So that the man of God may be adequate, can meet all

the demands. You can be equipped for every good work. Equipped means perfectly outfitted. You see what Paul is telling Timothy here, and he's ultimately telling us that all of God-breathed Scripture, the content of the 66 books of the Bible, not only is it sufficient to save you, it is also sufficient to sanctify you. Oh, and by the way, Timothy, you don't hold this truth in your heart only. You are to be pastoring and shepherding the next generation, and then to tell that generation that they need to be passing on these truths to the next generation. Look, ultimately, that's why we have it today, is it not? It's because Paul instructed Timothy to do this, and Timothy did that, and so have faithful Christians ever since. Men, this is why I started with this call, this exhortation for us at the beginning of our night tonight. We've got to embrace the sufficiency of Scripture, but then we've got to do something about it.

That's what we see in the pastoral epistles here. John MacArthur, he writes, "Between the Scriptures and the indwelling Holy Spirit, the believer needs no additional revelation to be informed on how to live the Christian life. We've got it all. You have the Spirit of the living God within you, and you've got His Word in front of you." Men, that's all we need.

There's one final text we can consider, and that's 2 Peter 1:3. Second Peter 1:3. Let me just read this text for you. Peter writes, "And seeing that God, His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence." The idea here is that the Christian, the believer in Jesus Christ, who is in the middle of his sanctification, has been given all things necessary to live a life of godliness unto the Lord. How do you grow in your sanctification? According to Peter here, how do you grow in life and godliness? Peter says, "through the knowledge of Him who called you by His own glory and excellence." In other words, not only did you come to a basic knowledge of Christ at salvation, but you continue to grow in your sanctification as you grow in your knowledge of Christ. You come to see the glory and excellence of Christ, the God man who died in your place, bearing your sins, your guilt, your shame, and then He gave you His righteousness.

Brothers, we never stop exploring those realities in Scripture, and it is those realities that keep pressing us into the one true God, changing us day by day from glory to glory. That's what the Scripture produces in us through the power of the Spirit.

Now, that's the biblical articulation of sufficiency. Quickly, and I do mean quickly. I want us to consider, thirdly, the historical witness of sufficiency. Now, I've given you many quotes throughout church history on your slides. We don't have time to work our way through all of these, so you can review this at some point this week or in the coming weeks. But my point in grouping together and gathering together quotes from church history is to demonstrate what an orthodox view a sufficiency is. And that is simply believing in the sufficiency of Scripture. So if you don't believe in the sufficiency of the Bible, you are rejecting the clear teaching of the Bible itself. In addition to that, if you don't believe in the sufficiency of Scripture, you are rejecting 2,000 years of church history that has affirmed this doctrine. Now, of course, remember, Scripture is always the authority, but the testimony for the sufficiency of Scripture is overwhelming throughout church history. Let's just look at a few representative examples for some pastors and theologians.

Irenaeus, 2nd century. He writes, "We knew not the provision for our salvation through others than those through whom the Gospel came to us, which indeed they preached. But afterwards, through the will of God, delivered to us in the Scriptures to be a pillar and foundation of our faith." Tertullian, in the 2nd century, just succinctly, he wrote, "I adore the fullness of the Scriptures." Augustine, 200 years later, he says, "In the things openly declared in the Scriptures, we can find whatever is necessary for faith and practice."

So you can see how this doctrine is developing. By the way, a little plug here for Book of the Month. You need to go get this book and read this. It's by Gerald Bray. It's Augustine on the Christian Life. It's an excellent read.

Basil of Caesarea, he was a Cappadocian father. "It is a proof of unbelief and a sign of pride, either to weaken any of those things which are written or to introduce what is not written."

And we can keep going here. We could skip over. Let's go over to the Reformation, John Calvin. "Scripture is the school of the Holy Spirit, just as nothing is omitted that is both necessary and useful to know. So nothing is taught except what is expedient to know." William Perkins, Puritans, William Ames, same as well. John Owen is in the mix. You jump forward to the 19th century with all of the Princetonian theologians. These guys were staunch defenders of the sufficiency of Scripture. Let's jump to the 20th century here, John Murray. "Scripture occupies

for us an exclusive place and performs an exclusive function as the only extant mode of revelation.” In other words, the Bible is the only revelation that we have from God, and that revelation is sufficient.

What about the creeds and confessions? Those were pastors and theologians. What about the creeds and confessions? All of the creeds and confessions talk about this. Okay? So you can look at the Geneva Confession written by a couple men, including John Calvin, the Articles of Religion. So we're thinking there Church of England. They wrote about the sufficiency of Scripture, the Second London Baptist Confession in 1689. These men articulated the sufficiency of Scripture. Again, you can read those. But all throughout Church history, it's almost universal agreement on this particular doctrine.

Now, let's finish our time tonight. In the few minutes we have left, let's talk about the appropriation of sufficiency. What are we supposed to do with this when we leave here tonight? What are we supposed to do with the sufficiency of Scripture? Well, men, let me tell you, the devil, Satan, he prowls around like a roaring lion and wants to utterly demolish our thinking on the sufficiency of the Bible. If he can get us to rely on or embrace at any level earthly wisdom, cultural consensus, pagan philosophies, pragmatism, etc., then he has succeeded in robbing us of all that God has given us in His sufficient Word. You've got to understand, Satan wants to do this. He wants to tamper with our thinking about the sufficiency of God's Word. Look, he can't actually tamper with God's Word. So he wants our view of it to be altered, to be distorted. This has always been His tactic, by the way.

He essentially said to Adam and Eve, don't believe what God has revealed to you at this time. It isn't sufficient for life and righteousness. Listen to my advice, my wisdom, my way. Is that not what he did? He made them question God's Word. God's Word wasn't sufficient enough, is what he tempted them with. Oh, the creation mandate, be fruitful and multiply. Be My representatives on the earth. Don't eat this, but you can have all of this. That's not sufficient. This has always been Satan's tactic. Well, Helmut Bracke, he says, “As the Holy Scriptures are the only rule for doctrine and life, the devil is intent upon overthrowing or obscuring this foundation to the utmost of his ability by means of instruments at his disposal. He's coming for us on this, men. He wants

us to think otherwise about the Bible. So as we think through application, I just want to think about it in broad categories, and you apply this in your own context.

Let's first look at in your own soul. Do you believe the sufficiency of Scripture in your own soul? I'm not asking about your neighbor, your spouse, your kids. I'm asking about you, and I've got to ask myself as well. Do I believe the sufficiency of the Bible in my own soul? Does Scripture govern your heart? Do you believe Scripture is sufficient to deal with your sin and to clothe you and cleanse you in Christ's righteousness? Do you believe Scripture is sufficient to transform you? Do you believe Scripture is sufficient to help you in your heart treasure Jesus Christ above all else and to promote the glory of God?

What about in your family? What about in your family? Do you believe Scripture is sufficient to help you lead and shepherd your wife, to sacrificially love her and to wash her with the Word, to sanctify her, to lead her? Do you believe that Scripture is sufficient to help you in 1 Peter 3 terms, to live with your wife in an understanding way? Do you believe Scripture can strengthen your marriage, maybe revitalize your marriage, maybe revolutionize your marriage? Do you believe that Scripture is sufficient to train up your kids, to train up your grandkids? Are you feeding them God's Word, or are they more in the world than anything else? We have been given eternal souls, our spouse, our kids, our grandkids. In close proximity, God has given us eternal souls. We have to give them the sufficient Word.

What about in your church? What about in your church? Is Scripture sufficient to govern our church doctrine, our church distinctives? Is Scripture sufficient to govern our corporate worship? Is Scripture sufficient to help our growth in our spiritual giftedness? Is Scripture sufficient to govern our fellowship?

Here's what Herman Bovinck says. Herman Bovinck, he says, "Now the church has not received this Scripture from God in order simply to rest on it, and still less in order to bury this treasure in earth. On the contrary, the church is called to preserve this Word of God, to explain it, to preach it, apply it, translate it, spread it abroad, recommend it, and defend it. In a word, to cause the thoughts of God laid down in Scripture, to triumph everywhere and at all times over the thoughts of man. All the work to which the church is called is the effort at and the ministration of the Word of God."

Men, are your thoughts completely held captive to the sufficient Word of God? In your own soul, in your family, in your church, and to think even more broadly, what about in your career? Is the Word of God sufficient in whatever your career is, whatever line of work you are currently participating in? Is Scripture sufficient to guide you to be the man of God wherever you work? What about in your community? What about in your community? How often do you interact with your neighbors and the people around you? Is God's Word sufficient for you to be salt and light on your street that you live? And even on a more wide spectrum, what about in your own country? What about in your own country? We must be salt and light. Here. Now.

And we must rest on the sufficient Word. Bavinck goes on to say, "It is a service of this Word of God when it is preached in the assembly of believer, that in our own hearts and lives, in our profession and business, in house and field and office and science and art, in state and community, in works of mercy and missions, and in all spheres and ways of life, this Word be applied, worked out, and made to rule." Brothers, "we have the prophetic word made more sure," and in it we have been given "all things that pertain to life and godliness."

Remember Psalm 1. "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers, but his delight, his delight is in the law of Yahweh." Let's pray.

Father God, Your Word is sufficient. God, because You are a sufficient God, and You have given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. Father, You have not only given us salvation in Your Son, Jesus Christ, but You have given us Your written Word and Your precious Holy Spirit to govern us in all matters of faith and practice. May we run nowhere else, but the treasure of Your Word. May it be sweeter to us than honey and more desirable than gold. Father, we love You.

Increase our love for You. Father, we treasure Your Son. Increase that gold mine in our own minds and hearts. Help us treasure Christ more. And God, help us remember that if theology isn't applied, it's theology that has been abandoned or aborted. God, do not let us waver from the sufficiency of Your Word. We ask for Your help. In Jesus' name, Amen.