



G R A C E

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI ♦ DEO ♦ GLORIA

THE BOOK OF ACTS

Sermon Notes

Marks of a New Testament Church:

The Sufficiency of Scripture

2 Timothy 3:10--4:4

December 30, 2007

- I. **Defining the Sufficiency of Scripture**
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 - a. What it is **NOT**
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- ❑ Jean-Paul Sartre was a French atheistic existential philosopher who lived from June 21, 1905 to April 15, 1980. It would be difficult to overestimate the influence that this single philosopher has had on Western thought. He has been referred to as “the most written about twentieth-century author.” In fact, his influence is so far-reaching that his existential philosophy has penetrated the contemporary church.
- ❑ Sartre’s philosophy now serves as the basis of what is often referred to as the Post-Modern Worldview. In short, Sartre’s philosophy is summed up in a phrase he popularized: “**existence precedes essence.**” As one individual put it, “For Sartre, who did not believe in God as the creator of humanity, believed that if there is no God to have conceived of our essence or nature, then we must come into existence first, and then create our own essence out of interaction with our surroundings and ourselves [i.e., our own personal experience].”
- ❑ A slightly different way of describing this saying [“existence precedes essence”] would be, “Facts are facts, but perception is reality.”
- ❑ In other words, Sartre’s belief was that the true essence of anything, to include God, was determined, not by the object [such as God] itself, but rather by the existence and experience of the individual.

- ❑ This philosophy, then, leads to the belief that, if I believe God is sovereign, then He is *for me, in my own personal existence and experience*; however, if you believe God is less than sovereign, then he is...*for you*.
- ❑ Thus the phrase, “what is right for you is right for you; but what is right for me is right for me.” Consequently, according to this [atheistic existential] worldview, you have no right to impose *your* morals upon me.
- ❑ Because of this worldview then, all universal moral absolutes [such as pre-meditated murder] lose all meaning. In other words, there are no moral absolutes!

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- ❑ Yet, tragically, this worldview has penetrated the Church.
- ❑ No longer is God’s Word considered the standard for faith and practice. No longer is it the canon [‘the measuring stick, or rod’].
- ❑ **Rather, our own existence, our own experience [just like Jean-Paul Sartre asserted] has become the standard.**
- ❑ In “Bible studies” it seems that the most common question is, “What do *you* think about this verse?” “What do *you feel* that it means?” Rather than, “What is the true meaning of this verse [regardless of what you may want it to mean]?”
- ❑ The great question, then, in the Church today is, “**Are the Scriptures to be our sufficient authority?**”
- ❑ Or, is our authority [pertaining to salvation, morality, faith, and practice] some **arbitrary combination of what we “think,” “feel,” and the Scriptures?**

I. Defining the Sufficiency of Scripture

- ❑ Before one can understand the doctrine of Scriptural sufficiency, one must first define *what it is*.
- ❑ ***Second London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689:***
“The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience.”
- ❑ Thus, the doctrine of Scriptural sufficiency states that Scripture and Scripture alone is the only authority by which one can (1) come to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and (2) continue in a life of obedience to the Lord’s will.

- Another way of viewing the sufficiency of Scripture is that Scripture is perfect and completely for accomplishing exactly what God intends for it to accomplish. In other words, the Scriptures will accomplish all that God intends for it to.

II. Understanding the Sufficiency of the Scriptures

- As stated earlier, the Scriptures are the **sole source of authority** salvation and sanctification. Furthermore, it is the **only** source of special divine revelation whereby we might know the will of God.
- In short, the doctrine of the Sufficiency of Scripture can be summed up in the two-word phrase coined by the Reformers: *sola scriptura*, the Scriptures Alone.
- Yet, it is helpful to also understand what the doctrine of Scriptural sufficiency does NOT mean.

a. What it is NOT

- First of all, Scriptural sufficiency does NOT mean that the Scriptures alone contain all knowledge that exists. The Scriptures are not some “code-book” whereby if we have the proper “key” we can unlock all of the knowledge in the universe, so to speak.
 - It should never concern us when we learn of principles in areas such as physics, medicine, and mathematics that are not mentioned in Scripture.
 - Such “new” knowledge [that is, it is new *to us*] does not threaten the authority or sufficiency of God’s Word, as long as it does not contradict God’s Word.
 - For example, the equation for energy, $E = mc^2$, became a part of the modern science vernacular through the work of a non-Christian.
 - This truth in no way threatens the authority or sufficiency of Scripture, as the Bible was not intended as a Science textbook.
 - **However, wherever the Bible does speak, whether it is in areas of history or science, for example, it speaks with infallible authority.**
 - Thus, as John MacArthur rightly states, “Scripture is inspired and inerrant in everything it teaches and reports.”
 - Therefore, contrary to the objections of modern, atheistic scientists, we must affirm the historical events of Scripture which often involved miraculous acts of God.
 - For example, we must affirm truths such as:

- God is a personal being, triune in nature, who created “out of nothing.”
 - Adam and Eve actually existed.
 - Noah truly did live, built an ark, and survived the deluge [the Flood] with his family, just as the Bible states.
 - Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were real men who lived as the Bible says.
 - Moses truly existed and lived as the Bible says.
 - The Exodus out of Egypt truly did occur, along with the ten plagues and the parting of the Red Sea.
 - David existed as King of Israel, in accordance with the Scripture.
 - All that the Bible states concerning the Life of Jesus Christ, to include His virginal conception, miraculous birth, life [to include all of His miracles], death on the Cross, His resurrection from the dead on the third day, and His ascension to the right hand of the Father **actually occurred**.
- NOTE: One can firmly hold to science and affirm the miracles of Scripture as well. The reason is that the God of the universe is not bound by His creation or the Laws of Physics, as He is transcendent, and the One who created these laws.
- Therefore, so long as modern science does not contradict Scripture, Christians should feel free to embrace it.
- Secondly, contrary to the modern Word of Faith movement, the Scriptures [and faith in Christ] are not sufficient for “health, wealth, and prosperity.”
 - The primary reason for this is because the Scriptures were never intended for such things.
 - This does not mean that these things are inherently bad; however, the Word of God takes our eyes on the things which can be seen [with the physical senses], and lifts them to things which cannot be seen, particularly God Himself, who is spirit.
- Thirdly, the Word of God is not sufficient with respect to knowing **about** God.
 - There is a fundamental distinction between knowing **about** God and actually **knowing God**.
 - In fact, the Apostle Paul writes, in his epistle to the Romans, “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.” [Romans 1:20]

- However, it is **only through Scripture** that one can truly **know God!** In other words, the Scriptures alone ARE sufficient to know God personally.

b. What it IS

- To declare that anything is “sufficient” begs the question, “Sufficient for what?”
- First, and possibly the most significant aspect of Scriptural sufficiency is that the Word of God alone saves. The Scriptures alone are sufficient for salvation, that is, they are sufficient for knowing God personally.

Romans 10:13-17:

“for ‘WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.’ How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, ‘HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!’ However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, ‘LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?’ **So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.**” [emphasis added]

1 Peter 1:23-25:

“**for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.**

For,

‘ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS,
AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS.
THE GRASS WITHERS,
AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF,
BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER ‘

And this is the word which was preached to you.”

[emphasis added]

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- Yet, in order to **biblically** answer this most important question [“For what are the Scriptures sufficient?”] more fully, it is most helpful to turn to the pages of Scripture, and specifically to the passage that best articulates the doctrine of Scriptural sufficiency: **2 Timothy 3:16.**

“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.”

- From this Verse, several points deserve exploration: (1) “All Scripture”; (2) Inspired by God; (3) profitable; (4) teaching; reproof; correction; training in righteousness; (5) so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

(1) “All Scripture”

- ❑ The first point, here is that “**All Scripture** is inspired by God...”
- ❑ This, of course, begs the question, “What is Scripture?”
- ❑ In short, it is the **Old and New Testaments** [all 66 Books].
- ❑ In fact, in Luke 24, the Resurrected Christ refers to the entire Old Testament [the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms] as “Scripture.”

Luke 24:25-27, 44-47:

And He said to them, ‘O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?’ Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in *all the Scriptures*.⁴⁴ Now He said to them, ‘These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then He opened their minds to understand *the Scriptures*, and He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.’” [emphasis added]

- ❑ Certainly, in the immediate context of 2 Timothy 3:16-17, the Apostle Paul is referring to the Old Testament; however, throughout the New Testament, the Apostles refer to the New Testament as well as “Scripture.”

1 Timothy 5:18:

“For the Scripture says, ‘YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING,’ and ‘The laborer is worthy of his wages.’”

- ❑ In this passage, Paul quotes from both Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 17:10, referring to them both as “Scripture.”
 - Deuteronomy 25:4:
“You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.”
 - Luke 17:10:
“Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for **the laborer is worthy of his wages**. Do not keep moving from house to house.”
[emphasis added]

1 Thessalonians 2:13:

“For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received **the word of God which you heard from us**, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, **the word of God**, which also performs its work in you who believe.” [emphasis added]

2 Peter 3:15-16:

“and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; **just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you**, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also **the rest of the Scriptures**, to their own destruction.” [emphasis added]

- ❑ Here, the Apostle Peter indicates that Paul’s writings are Scripture, including them with “the *rest of the Scriptures*.”
- ❑ **Read also** Galatians 1:11-2:21; 1 Corinthians 2:6-13; 1 Peter 1:10-12

(2) “Inspired by God”

- ❑ According to B.B. Warfield, “God breathed the Scriptures out [from Himself]” and, therefore, to translate the Greek word *theopneustos* as “inspired” is “a distinct and even misleading mistranslation.”
- ❑ Warfield continues, “The Greek word in this passage – θεοπνευστος – very distinctly does not mean ‘inspired by God.’ ...The Greek term has, however, nothing to say of *inspiring* or of *inspiration*: [rather] it speaks only of a ‘spiring’ or ‘spiration.’ What it says of Scripture is, not that it is ‘breathed into by God’ or is the product of Divine ‘inbreathing’ into its human authors, but that it is breathed out by God, ‘Godbreathed,’ the product of the creative breath of God. **In a word, what is declared by this fundamental passage is simply that the Scriptures are a Divine product without any indication of how God has operated in producing them.**”
- ❑ As such, the Words of Scripture are not simply “inspired” [as we would possibly understand the word in our modern usage], but the very words of God Himself.
- ❑ According to Benjamin B. Warfield, “Inspiration is that extraordinary, supernatural influence (or, passively, the result of it,) exerted by the Holy Ghost on the writers of our Sacred Books, by which their words were rendered also the words of God, and therefore, perfectly infallible.”
- ❑ Therefore, as a result of being “God-breathed”, “All Scripture is inerrant and infallible.”
- ❑ Robert Reymond in his great work, *The New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, writes, “By ‘inerrancy’ we intend essentially the same thing as ‘infallibility,’ namely, that **the Bible does not err in any of its affirmations, whether those affirmations be in the spheres of spiritual realities or morals, history or science, and is therefore incapable of teaching error**. Because the Bible is God’s Word, its assertions are as true as if God spoke to man today directly from heaven.”

(3) Profitable

- ❑ When Paul writes that “All Scripture is...profitable” he uses the word *ophelimos* [οφελιμος] he does so, in this context of conveying an idea of sufficiency and completeness.
- ❑ Such is even clearer when this passage is read in light of **Joshua 1:8** and **Psalm 119**.
- ❑ Joshua 1:8: “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth...be careful to do according to all that is writing in it...”
- ❑ Read also **Psalm 19:7-13**.
- ❑ Yet one, once again, must ask, “Profitable, complete, sufficient for what?”

(4) Teaching; Reproof; Correction; Training in Righteousness

a. Teaching

- ❑ The Greek here is *didaskalia* [διδασκαλια], which refers to “divine instruction or doctrine.”
- ❑ In other words, the Scriptures, in both the Old and New Testament, contain all that God intends for us to know about Him personally, as well as His will.
- ❑ Thus, the Scriptures are the very **teachings of God Himself**.

b. Reproof

- ❑ Here the Greek word *elegmos* [ελεγμος] “carries the idea of rebuking in order to convict of misbehavior or false doctrine.”
- ❑ This aspect of Scripture is certainly directly related to its teaching function.
- ❑ Richard Trench, a noted nineteenth-century British theologian, comments that *elegmos* refers to rebuking “another with such effectual wielding of the victorious arm of the truth, as to bring him not always to a confession, yet at least to a conviction of his sin.”
- ❑ Phillip Towner writes that *elegmos* involves “the educative act designed to produce self-awareness of sin.”

Hebrews 4:12-13: “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

- In short, all Scripture is sufficient for exposing the sin in our lives.

c. Correction

- Here, Paul uses the word *epanorthosis* [Greek, επανορθοσις]. It is the only time it is used in the New Testament. It refers to the restoration of something to its original and proper condition.
- One scholar writes, “in secular Greek literature it was used of setting upright an object that had fallen down and of helping a person back on his feet after stumbling.”
- Thus, not only does Scripture expose sin in our lives, it restores us. It does not simply leave us in our sin of awareness [to our sin].
- Read **1 John 1:9; 1 Peter 2:1-2; and Psalm 119:9-11.**

d. Training in Righteousness

- Finally, Scripture is sufficient for “training in righteousness.”
- The word for training *paideia* [παιδεια] originally referred to the bringing or raising up of a child. It carries with it the idea of building up [toward an ultimate goal].
- Thus, it is through Scripture that we might know the standard of righteousness – the standard toward which we are to train.
- In short, this process of “training in righteousness” is also known as **sanctification**.
- Therefore, once again, Scripture is sufficient for salvation and sanctification.

(5) So that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

- The Apostle Paul does not end by explaining what the Scriptures are sufficient for; rather he continues, explaining the ultimate purpose of Scripture’s sufficiency: so that the man of God may be adequately equipped for good works.
- This truth is perfectly consistent with Paul’s other writings. For example, Ephesians 2:9-11, explains that we, God’s people saved by grace, were created in Christ Jesus for good works.
- In fact Paul, here in 2 Timothy 3:17, is asserting that the Word of God is sufficient **so that the man of God may be adequate...**
 - The word here for adequate [*artios*, αρτιος] carries with it the idea that an individual will be able to accomplish everything he or she has been trained to do.

- Therefore, the Word of God and the Word of God alone is sufficient to equip us to accomplish everything God calls us to do.

III. Implications of the Sufficiency of Scripture

1. We are to add nothing to Scripture, for there is no new revelation.

- This is my biggest problem with the Charismatic movement today.
- The Scriptures alone simply are not sufficient. Rather, often times those within the Charismatic movement rely on the Scriptures plus miraculous signs, such as tongues-speaking, words of knowledge, and prophecy.

2. The Scriptures alone contain everything we are to know concerning God, His nature, and salvation [i.e., the Word of God alone is necessary for salvation].

3. Scripture is sufficient for Evangelism.

- Because the Scriptures are sufficient for salvation, we must rely on the Scriptures alone in our evangelistic and mission efforts.
- Unfortunately, too often our evangelistic efforts reflect a belief that Scripture alone is not enough to save.
- In fact, one of the leaders in today's missions movement said recently at the American Association of Bible Colleges Convention, "The simple gospel is no longer adequate without signs and wonders."
- Tragically, we often rely on techniques, "signs and wonders," and our own personal "salesmanship" as a means of "closing the deal."
- Yet, when we use techniques, methods and a message that is other than Scripture when evangelizing, what are those who accept our message actually accepting? This is, no doubt, one of the great sources of false conversions that we see in the modern church.

4. All instruction needed to know and do the will of God and consequently to live a life of obedience to the LORD is found in the Scriptures.

- One of the most common questions among young people [people of all ages, in fact] today is, "What is the will of God for my life?"
- Yet even in the church, rather than solely relying on Scripture, we search for God in one or more of the following ways:

- **Visions and ‘Signs’**
- **Circumstances**
 - Although our circumstances are useful and it is wise to consider them, we should not think of them as ‘authoritative.’
 - I often hear, ‘Maybe God is trying to tell me something’ with respect to our circumstances. Unfortunately, such a statement seems to indicate that we have elevated the ‘revelation’ of our circumstances to that of Scripture.
- **I have a ‘Peace’ about it**
 - People often ask one other concerning various decisions, ‘Do you have a peace?’
 - Justification for such a ‘feeling’ of ‘peace’ is nowhere to be found in Scripture. The ‘peace which passes all understanding’ is something much more significant than an emotional, circumstantial ‘peace’ that can even be manufactured.
 - The truth is that one’s “peace” typically changes directly with one’s emotions.
- **A ‘Word’ from the LORD / The Lord ‘Spoke’ to me.../ The Lord told me...**
 - People often speak of having a ‘Word from the LORD’ which is independent of Scripture.
 - God **does** speak still today. However, a belief in the sufficiency of Scripture – *sola scriptura* – demands that we affirm that He speaks today solely through the illuminating work of the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit.
 - Yet, if the Scriptures are the all-sufficient authority of God, then how can this be valid? [It can’t!]
- **Tradition – ‘It’s the way we have always done things’**
 - Tradition is another unreliable ‘metric’ for determining the will of God.
 - The reason for this is that many traditions are not even biblical.
- **‘The Holy Spirit [or simply ‘God’] led me...’**
 - Once again, such a statement, *independent of the Scripture*, often reveals a lack of trust in the sufficiency of God’s Word.
- Yet, knowing the will of God is quite simple for the believer:
 1. Is the choice you are looking to make ‘Moral’ in nature? If it is, then the Bible will address it. Obey what the Bible says.
 - In other words, if you are angry with someone, some form of retaliation is not an option that is within God’s revealed will.
 2. However, most choices in life do not fall into this category. Choices such as, ‘Who should I marry?’ or ‘Where should I go to college?’ In these situations, we should simply: a.) submit ourselves to God through prayer; b.) pray for wisdom; c.) use our brain, and d.) freely choose.

- James 1:5 states, ‘But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.’
- Also Psalm 37:4, ‘Delight yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart.’
- Circumstances will often eliminate certain choices [although, once again, circumstances do not constitute God’s ‘authoritative’ counsel. In other words, if a high school senior wants to go to a college that is \$30,000 a year, yet, the family does not have the money, then that is likely not the best college to choose [although it is not necessarily the ‘wrong one’ either].
- Another common decision that individuals struggle with is who to marry. This, too, is a rather simple process. Is the potential future mate a Christian? If the answer is no, then the Bible has already addressed it: you should not marry him or her. However, if the answer is yes, the next answer is also simple: Do you love him or her? If the answer is yes, then you are free to marry.

NOTE: There are consequences to every action we choose. Some consequences are good. Some are bad. Good decisions often have bad consequences, and vice versa. However, we do not determine whether or not we are in God’s will on the sole basis of our circumstances. We must seek wisdom and act on it. Thus, we must walk in faith.

- Also, it is important to realize that we are not authorized to use our freedom in such a way that it causes another brother or sister in Christ to sin [Yet, this ‘warning’ is a COMMAND in Scripture].

5. Scripture alone is the standard by which we determine what is sinful.

- ❑ When people do not act as we think they should act, or how we want them to act, we characterize [at least in our perceptions of them] their actions as wrong [i.e., sinful].
- ❑ Further, when people act outside of the realm of what we consider “normal” we think there is something wrong with them.
- ❑ Yet, just because people do not act as we think they should act, does not necessarily mean that they are acting in a sinful way.

○ In fact, when we use our opinions as the standard of what is right and wrong, we have placed ourselves in the position of God, for we have made ourselves the moral standard by which we judge others.

- This is the essence of legalism, which is most certainly blasphemous in the sight of our God.

6. A belief in the sufficiency of Scripture forces us to make a distinction between our opinions, traditions and biblical interpretation. Consequently, we must submit our opinions to the authority of Scripture.

- ❑ Too often, we come to the Biblical text with our “minds made up” concerning a certain issue and refuse to submit our opinions to the Scriptures.
- ❑ One example of this is the role of women in ministry. I recently had a rather heated discussion with an individual concerning the role of women in the church.
- ❑ She felt, quite passionately, that women should be able to serve as a Pastor in a local church. She said, “Women can do whatever men can.” I proceeded to tell her that I agreed with her, that women were perfectly able...capable to perform the function of preaching and teaching; however, there were biblical guidelines that we dare not cross. The biblical position was quite clear [1 Timothy 2:12]. It was not a matter of *ability*, but rather, *permissibility*.
- ❑ Therefore, because of our belief in the sufficiency of Scripture, one will, at times, embrace doctrines and beliefs which are not popular [even among professing Christians].
- ❑ Yet, our traditions, even when they are not explicitly biblical, are closely-guarded “sacred cows” which we will often preserve to the death. [Consider even “Baptist traditions” such as outright prohibitions against drinking and dancing! ~ yet, are such prohibitions biblical?]
- ❑ Unfortunately, we are often more offended when people attack these closely-held traditions than when people violate the very precepts of God’s Word itself.
 - Thus, we must continually challenge even our most cherished traditions by the standard of Scripture, lest these extra-biblical “precepts” become the standard by which we judge others.

“We all therefore have to face this ultimate and final question: Do we accept the Bible as the Word of God, as the sole authority in all matters of faith and practice, or do we not? Is the whole of my thinking governed by Scripture, or do I come with my reason and pick and choose out of Scripture and sit in judgment upon it, putting myself and modern knowledge forward as the ultimate standard and authority? The issue is crystal clear. Do I accept Scripture as a revelation from God, or do I trust speculation, human knowledge, human learning, human understanding and human reason? Or, putting it still more simply, do I pin my faith to, and subject all my thinking to, what I read in the Bible? Or do I defer to modern knowledge, to modern learning, to what people think today, to what we know at this present time which was not known in the past? It is inevitable that we occupy one or the other of those two positions.” Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

“True Christians are people who acknowledge and live under the word of God. They submit without reserve to the word of God written in “the Book of Truth”, believing the teaching, trusting the promises, following the commands. Their eyes are upon the God of the Bible as their Father and the Christ of the Bible as their Savior.” J.I. Packer, Knowing God