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## Material Sufficiency | “It’s all there”

- “Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD!”  
Ps. 119:1
- “You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you.”  
Deut 4:2
- This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Josh. 1:8

**If God’s written revelation was complete and sufficient for those under the old covenant, should we expect anything different in the written revelation for those under the new covenant? It’s difficult to see why, and surely the burden of proof would fall on the person who claims that God’s pattern of sufficiency in written revelation changes with the new covenant documents.**

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- But he answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” Matt. 4:4 (cf. Deut 8:6)
- But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom[a] you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. 2 Tim. 3:14-17

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## Clarity | “We can understand it”

- “And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” Deut. 6:6-7
- “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” Ps. 119:105
- “So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. <sup>3</sup> And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.... They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.” Neh. 8:2-3, 8

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## Clarity | “We can understand it”

- “Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.” Acts 17:11
- “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.” Gal. 1:8
- “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” Rom. 15:4
- 2 Tim. 3:16-17, redux

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## Clarity | “We can understand it”

- In many cases, the Gospels and letters of the NT are not addressed to leaders, or the theologically well-educated, but entire congregations for actual use in affecting church practice and the Christian life (e.g., Gal. 1:2; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Jn. 2:1).
- The New Testament expects Gentiles, with no theological background, to understand its message as well as its application and interpretation of the Old Testament (e.g., Rom. 1:7, 16, 9-11; 1 Pet. 1:22-25; 3:8-12).
- The New Testament was written in Koine (common) Greek, the most widely used written language of the time in that part of the world in order to make it as accessible to the widest audience. This language choice obviously suggests the authors’ desire to be understood widely.

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## Clarity | “We can understand it”

- The Gospel authors often translate Hebrew and Aramaic phrases to ensure that what they were saying would be understood by readers/hearers (e.g., Matt. 1:23; Mark 5:41; 15:34; Jn. 20:16).
- Widespread, cross-denominational agreement on core issues (e.g., creation *ex nihilo*, doctrine of God, doctrine of Christ, Trinity, resurrection, new heavens/earth, et al.).
- **God, the Effective Communicator**
  - Scripture is not just a collection of truths or facts, but rather, purposeful divine communication.
    - If God is all-powerful, does everything with excellence and can’t err, how could we make sense of an unclear, indiscernible message to his people despite his best efforts?
      - ❖ Thompson: “If Scripture is not clear, not generally accessible to faithful men and women who prayerfully read, seeking to know the mind of God, what are we then saying about God?”

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## Formal Sufficiency

- When we combine material sufficiency and clarity, we get formal sufficiency: Scripture contains all revelation necessary for salvation and righteous living and that this teaching can be learned from the Bible by believers earnestly seeking its truth through normal means.
- As such, formal sufficiency affirms that Scripture is the sole, infallible rule of faith for the Church and the final arbiter on everything to which it speaks. In other words, while two distinct doctrines, the formal sufficiency of scripture entails the final authority of Scripture in matters of doctrine, faith and practice.
- Often, the sufficiency of Scripture is confused with the *comprehensiveness of Scripture* (i.e., Scripture speaks specifically to everything), which is *not* what the Reformers intended to assert.

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## Four Objections to Formal Sufficiency

- “Traditions” in Scripture (e.g., 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6; 1 Cor. 15:1-7)
- The Canon Objection
  - You must know the canonical documents in order to live rightly before God.
  - The Bible doesn’t contain what ancient documents are canonical.
  - Therefore, the Bible does not contain all information necessary to live rightly before God.
- “Traditions” in Church History
  - J.N.D. Kelly: “Throughout the whole period, Scripture and tradition ranked as complementary authorities, media different in form but coincident in content. To inquire which counted as superior or more ultimate is to pose the question in misleading and anachronistic terms.”
- The Argument from Widespread Disagreement