



GRACE

Reformed Baptist Church

Soli ♦ Deo ♦ Gloria

THE BOOK OF ACTS

Sermon Notes

Back to the Basics

The Sufficiency of Scripture

2 Timothy 3:14-17

August 23, 2009

- I. Introduction
- II. The *Sufficiency* of Scripture
 - a. What it is NOT
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- In the late 1960s, a small group of conservative leaders within the largest Protestant denomination in America became gravely concerned over the fact that liberalism had crept in and infiltrated the seminaries and pulpits of the Southern Baptist Convention.
 - In fact, a now famous Masters thesis by a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary seemed to prove their point. In this thesis, written in the 1970s, Master of Divinity student Noel Wesley Hollyfied, Jr., revealed that while 87% of first year MDiv. Students at Southern Seminary believed “Jesus is the Divine Son of God and I have no doubts about it”, only 63% of last year students affirmed this statement.
- Therefore, these conservative Southern Baptist leaders – Dallas Pastor W.A. Criswell; Memphis Pastor Adrian Rogers; Houston Judge Paul Pressler; and Dallas theologian Paige Patterson, orchestrated what is now referred to as the *Conservative Resurgence* – a movement designed to replace liberal professors in Southern Baptist Seminaries with conservative ones who embraced the inerrancy of the Word of God.

- ❑ Over the course of the next two decades, Conservative leaders fought to ensure that each year, a Conservative (Inerrantist) Leader was elected to the post of President of the Southern Baptist Convention. This move ensured that he would be able to appoint the necessary fellow-conservatives into open Trustee positions in Southern Baptist Seminaries. This, in turn, would ensure that the Professors hired to teach in the Seminaries would also be conservative inerrantists.
- ❑ By the early 1990s, the goals delineated by the architects of the *Resurgence* had all essentially been reached.
- ❑ In other words, the Southern Baptist Convention was “Conservative” once again.
- ❑ Yet, the disappointing truth regarding this “Conservative Resurgence” is that the battle was centered on inerrancy alone. And while inerrancy is essential in the life of a believer, it **alone** is not enough.
 - That is, it is one thing for a Christian to believe the Bible is without error. It is another thing to believe that the Bible is without error **and** is sufficient for all faith and practice.
 - Unfortunately, the *Resurgence* stopped at inerrancy and declared “victory.”
 - Consequently, there are literally thousands of Southern Baptist Convention Churches – many of which are *mega*-churches – that stand, with great conviction on the truth of inerrancy, yet when it comes to sufficiency, they are woefully lacking.
- ❑ **In fact, it may be properly said that the primary impetus for the founding of Grace Reformed Baptist Church was the truth of the sufficiency of God’s Word.**
- ❑ The founding elders in this church were members of large, conservative Southern Baptist Convention Churches that affirmed the inerrancy of Scripture; yet, the sufficiency of Scripture seemed to have no place in these congregations.
- ❑ And so, this morning, as we conclude our *Back to the Basics* series, based on the founding principles of Grace Reformed Baptist Church, I would like us to examine the doctrine of the **Sufficiency** of Scripture.

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.

J.I. Packer states, “[Scripture] consists not of clues offered as a basis for discursive inference to those who are clever enough, as in a detective story, but in the unique force which, through the Spirit, the story of Jesus, and the knowledge of Scripture, always carry with them to strike everyone to whom they come.”

- 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 Albert Einstein, 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” (*ex nihilo*).
 - 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.
 - **It is also important to understand that simply because Scripture is silent on a particular issue, does not mean that the issue is unimportant; rather, the issue is not essential in accomplishing what the Bible is intended to accomplish.**
 - **Therefore, we “speak where the Scripture speaks” and we are “silent where the Scriptures are silent.”**
- 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.
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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]

* * * * *

- 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.”

- “All Scripture”, as we saw over the past two weeks, includes, and is limited to, the 66 canonical books of the Old and New Testaments (Genesis through Revelation).

(1) Profitable

- When Paul writes that “All Scripture is...profitable” he uses the word *ophelimos* [οφελιμος]. He does so, in this context, 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?”

(2) 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 **Psalms 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.

(3) 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*, ἀρτιος] 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 special** [salvific] **revelation.**

- This is my biggest problem with the Charismatic movement today.
 - Charismatic Christians seek revelatory “signs and wonders” apart from the Scriptures in order to determine the will of God.
- 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.

Christians know that in addition to the word of God spoken directly to them in the Scriptures, God’s word has also gone forth to create, and control, and order things around them; but since the Scriptures tell them that all things work together for their good, the thought of God’s ordering their circumstances brings them only joy. Christians...use the Word of God as a touchstone by which to test the various views that are put to them, and they will not touch anything which they are not sure that Scripture sanctions. J.I. Packer, Knowing God

- Charismatics often speak of God “speaking” to them; and we, as Reformed Protestants do not deny that God speaks still today. However, the fundamental distinction centers around the **mode** in which God speaks today. For He speaks, but not through “signs and wonders”, but rather through the illuminating of His Word.

Any teaching which does not square with Scripture is to be rejected even if it snows miracles every day. Martin Luther

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

- This is one of the primary purposes of Scripture – to **know** God.

John Murray, in his article *The Finality and Sufficiency of Scripture*, wrote:

Since we no longer have prophets, since we do not have our Lord with us as he was with the disciples, and since we do not have new organs of revelation as in apostolic times, Scripture in its total extent, according to the conception entertained by our Lord and his apostles, is the only revelation of the mind and will of God available to us. This is what the finality of Scripture means for us; it is the only extant revelatory Word of God.

...It is only in and through Scripture that we have any knowledge of or contact with him who is the image of the invisible God...Without Scripture we are excluded completely from the knowledge, faith, and fellowship of him who is the effulgence of the Father's glory and the transcript of his being, as destitute of the Word of life as the disciples would have been if Jesus had not disclosed himself through his spoken word...Our dependence upon Scripture is total. Without it we are bereft of revelatory Word from God, from the counsel of God 'respecting all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life.'

...It is because we have not esteemed and prized the perfection of Scripture and its finality, that we have resorted to other techniques, expedients, and methods of dealing with the dilemma that confronts us all if we are alive to the needs of this hour...let us also know that it is not the tradition of the past, not a precious heritage, and not the labors of the fathers, that are to serve this generation in this hour, but the Word of the living and abiding God deposited for us in Holy Scripture."

- It is interesting that I have never met someone who embraces the doctrines of grace who didn't affirm the inerrancy of Scripture. For, it is only through the Scriptures that we can know such particular characteristics of Almighty God.

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."
- In fact, in many "techniques" taught by "Conservative" churches, the unadulterated Gospel message is rarely taught, for fear that it will "scare away" or "turn off" a potential convert.
- In fact, in such methods, evangelists are urged to essentially "ease into" a careful "soft" presentation of the Gospel.

- 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. The Scriptures alone are sufficient for Worship.

- Another area where the Scriptures are sufficient is Worship.
- Unfortunately, though, most worship services are designed to maximize the individual's "experience."
 - One of the most influential Southern Baptists in the past 150 years, Professor E.Y. Mullins wrote, "That which we know most indubitably [certainly] are the facts of inner experience."
 - This perspective has made its way into the practice of worship in Southern Baptist life.
 - In such services, the exposition of the Scriptures is perceived as "boring" or "irrelevant."
 - Services, then, are determined based, not upon what the Scriptures declare, but rather what the people desire.
- Yet, even in our Worship, we must reflect an unswerving belief in the sufficiency of Scripture.
 - This is why our services are designed in the manner that they are.
 - Worship is essentially the act of God's people responding to His calling.
 - Therefore, we begin with the Scriptures and end with the Scriptures.
 - Furthermore, the Scriptures are declared, and then we respond. This is the pattern of biblical worship.

5. 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?"

- ❑ The manner in which it seems many Christians seek the Will of the LORD, the Scriptures are helpful, but **not sufficient or necessary**.
- ❑ 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 Psalms 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].

Consider the situation we currently face with our building. God has yet to verbally speak to us, or provide us with a sign regarding where we should meet (and He will not). Rather, he has given us all we need to make a decision that will glorify Him. Yet, we know that we should exercise wisdom and act within our means (for God has declared this in the Scriptures). Within these bounds, we have tremendous freedom to choose. However, we must act within the revealed will of God, exercising good stewardship within the means God has provided us.

6. Because the Scriptures are sufficient, we must continually examine them to ensure we are living our lives in accordance with them.

- This final point reflects the Reformation motto: *Semper Reformata*, always reforming.
- May we never think that, as a local congregation, we have “arrived” . . . that we are perfect. We must continually seek to reflect more clearly the mandate of Christ and His apostles regarding the gathered body of believers here on earth.

“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