



“Understanding the Bible”

Section 1: What is the Bible?

Unit 1.5: Our Necessary & Sufficient Guide



I) Being Fed by More Than Bread

- So far in our first four units of this section, we have discussed the structure, purpose, foundation, authority, and clarity of the Bible. While these are all precious truths that uniquely describe God’s Holy Word, we must not overlook another characteristic that seems obvious but is often ignored: The **necessity** of Scripture. This is because we need the words of God to nourish our soul as desperately as we need food from God to nourish our bodies. In Matthew 4:4 as Satan challenged Jesus in the wilderness to turn stone into bread, Christ responded to the devil by saying, *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”* He was reciting the words of Deuteronomy 8:3, and in doing so our Lord reminded us through temptation and every other stage of our Christian walk that we need God’s Word to fulfill God’s will.

II) The Source of Our Salvation

- To begin developing our concept of the necessity of Scripture, we need to start with the Bible’s necessity for our **salvation** as born-again Christians. In earlier units, we discussed the two major ways that God has revealed Himself to mankind, including the general revelation of nature, and the special revelation of His Word through Christ and the Bible. The reason that God chose to offer us this special revelation of Holy Scripture is not only because we would not know Him otherwise, but also because we would never have known the salvation that He made possible through His Son.
- In the popular Westminster Confession of Faith that was drafted in 1646 and is still used today by several Christian denominations, it states, *“Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men unexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of His will, which is necessary unto salvation. This statement forces us to confront the truth that only God’s Word can offer us the gift of eternal life that was secured through Christ our Lord. Without the Bible, we would not know our need for salvation, nor would we know God’s plan of salvation revealed through the gospel. It is because of the Bible’s necessity for salvation that we can echo the words of the Apostle Peter in **John 6:68** who professed to Christ, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”*

III) A Relationship That Requires Revelation

- Now we know that the Bible is necessary to understand who God is and what God has offered us through the saving work of Jesus Christ. But we must also embrace the truth that God revealed Himself to us and then offered us a way of salvation through His Son because He desires to have an eternal relationship with His creation. God has made it clear that there is no way to commune with Him in a personal relationship if we do not abide daily in His Word. As theologian John Frame reminds us, *“People often claim to have a personal relationship to Christ, while being uncertain about the role of Scripture in their relationship. But the relationship that Christ has established with his people is a covenant relationship and therefore a verbal relationship, among other things. Jesus’ words, today, are found only in Scripture. So, if we are going to have a covenant relationship with Jesus, we must acknowledge Scripture as His Word. No Scripture, no Lord. No Scripture, no Christ.”* This statement from Frame echoes the very proclamation of Christ Himself when He said to His followers in **John 8:31**, *“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples.”*

IV) Revelation is Also Linked to Redemption

- Having made an argument for the necessity of the Bible, we now turn our attention to another characteristic of God's Word that is closely related: the sufficiency of Scripture. If God's Word is what we need to know God, be saved by God, and have an abiding relationship with God, then we must recognize that in the Holy Scriptures our wise and loving God provided all the information needed for us to receive these promised gifts. Also, we need to recognize the inseparable link between the sufficiency of Christ's finished work for our salvation as the Word of God made flesh, with the sufficiency of God's finished authorship of the Word of God written. In Hebrews 1:1-2 it says, *"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world."* This passage teaches us that the work of Christ revealed in Scripture was the final piece of God's revelation to us, and there is nothing we should add to it or take away from it. Author Kevin DeYoung reiterates this connection by stating, *"Scripture is enough because of the work of Christ is enough. They stand or fall together. The Son's redemption and the Son's revelation must both be sufficient."*

V) A God Who Speaks Sufficiently

- We need to trust that what God intends for us to know, He communicates sufficiently to us in His Word. In the Bible, we have more than enough information available to know Him and be obedient to His will. When we don't trust in the sufficiency of God's Word, we are in danger of re-committing the original sin of Adam and Eve. Back in Genesis 3:1, Satan first questioned God's Word by asking Eve, *"Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"* Through challenging what God said, the devil deceitfully tempted Eve to doubt the sufficiency of what God communicated to her and Adam. Eve began to wonder if God was hiding valuable information, and she sinned and ate the fruit because she falsely believed that what God revealed was not enough to satisfy her needs.

VI) Becoming Equipped for Every Good Work

- We are also reminded throughout Scripture that God's Word is sufficient enough to equip us to complete the kingdom work we are assigned. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, *"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."* When we read this text we know that God's Word is sufficient because it equips us for teaching (how to think right) reproof (how not to think wrong) correction (how not to act wrong) and training in righteousness (how to act right). In these areas, we have been given all the information we need, and abiding in God's Word through the guidance of God's Spirit will strengthen us to fulfill God's will for our kingdom assignments.

VII) An Eternal Word is Eternally Relevant

- A buzz word that has become popular in contemporary, "seeker-friendly," churches is the word relevant. These churches will typically replace pews with chairs, pulpits with lecterns, and suits and ties with designer jeans and gourmet coffee. While this approach to worship is completely acceptable under the gospel freedom that we enjoy as Christians, many of these churches change the message along with the medium. They do not commit themselves to expositional preaching of Bible texts because some believe that to be relevant today, people need information that is not in the Bible. But what we have in our Bibles is as relevant to our world now as it has ever been. As DeYoung states about Scripture, *"We do not need to add to it to meet today's challenges or subtract from it to mesh with today's ideals."*

VIII) Learning to Swim in the Scriptures

- Finally, author Chris Wright gives us a beautiful illustration that can help us connect the amazing clarity of God's Word that we spoke about in Unit 1.4 with the sufficiency of Scripture described in this unit. Like an ocean, Wright argues that the Bible meets us where we are and it is clear enough and sufficient enough for us to go swimming. Wright says, *"The Bible is like a great ocean. It has a sandy beach with shallows where even children can safely play. It has deeper parts where adults can swim. But it also has vast depths that we may never get to the bottom of."*