

UNIT 3: God's Revealing Work

Section 7: Perspicuity, Necessity, Sufficiency

Theological Works:

Busenitz, Calvin, Hodge, Grudem,
MacArthur, McCune, Packer, Pettegrew

INTRODUCTION:

Over the past few months we have discussed several very important topics regarding the nature and character of the Scriptures. Being God's Word, we explained that the Scriptures come on God's authority – they are truly the “out-breathing” of God. For that reason they are completely true, without error for any of its matter, and a faithful and trustworthy guide, without any falsehood in its teaching. The Scriptures are Infallible and Inerrant – a quality that can only be spoken of them because they are Inspired by God! For all of the above reasons, the Scriptures therefore have “absolute authority” for they come to us on God's authority. From that point in our discussion we spent several weeks talking about issues of Canonicity (which books make up God's recorded revelation for man) and Textual Criticism (which words make up those books from the manuscript evidence we have) and Translation (what should be our method for translating the Scriptures into modern languages). These were all points of discussion arising from further implications of the doctrine of Inspiration.

But now this morning, I'd like us to discuss implications arising from another subject we introduced at the beginning of this unit – Illumination. We believe that the Holy Spirit superintended the writing of Scripture in such a way that the final product is exactly what God intended (to the jots & tittles), but not so as to have excluded the personalities and experiences of the individual human writers [Verbal Plenary Inspiration]. Now, while this special “superintendence” extends only to the writing of the Scriptures themselves, this is NOT to say that the Holy Spirit's work stopped at that. The Scriptures themselves point to the fact that He is at work “illuminating” our understanding so that we receive God's Word rightly (**1 John 2:27**)! Unlike revelation and inspiration (given only to the biblical writers), illumination is for all Christians... but we must be careful on how we define it! (1) It does not mean we know and understand everything (**Deut 29:29**) (2) It does not mean we don't need human teachers (**Eph 4:11-12**) (3) It does not mean that study is unnecessary (**II Tim 2:15**) (4) It does mean that only Christians are able to rightly understand Scripture (**1 Cor 2:10-16**), but even this doesn't mean that we won't come to difficult passages (**2 Pet 3:16**) where our interpretations might differ.

The last section in “God's Revealing Work” that we will look at is “Interpretation.” But as a sort of prelude to that study, we need to first grasp three more important characteristics of Scripture which serves as a bridge between illumination and interpretation. All of these qualities are not only taught straightforwardly by Scripture, but also are seen practically in the life of believers! Our ORRB Confession (Ch 5, Sect 1) states:

The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, inerrant, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience (**2 Timothy 3:15-17; Luke 16:29, 31; Ephesians 2:20**), 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 inexcusable (**Romans 1:19-21; Romans 2:14-15; Psalm 19:1-3**); yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of his will which is necessary unto salvation (**Psalm 19:7-9; Luke 24:27, 44; Hebrews 1:1**). Therefore it pleased the Lord at various times and in diverse manners to reveal himself, and to declare his will unto his church; and afterward for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan, and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing (**Proverbs 22:19-21; Romans 15:4; 2 Peter 1:19-20**); which makes the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary, those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.”

Q1: Perspicuity: Who is able to understand the Bible rightly?

Q2: Necessity: Is the Bible necessary to know God?

Q3: Sufficiency: Does the Bible provide all I need to believe and behave in a God-honoring fashion?

I. The Perspicuity of Scripture

A. Defining Perspicuity

1. **Larry Pettegrew**, “It is not a difficult task to define ‘perspicuity’ even though, as some have remarked, the term is not very ‘perspicuous’ anymore! The perspicuity of Scripture means simply ‘the Bible is a plain book.’”
2. In other words – the Bible has an essential “Clarity” to it. But understand the following:
 - a. As we’ve stated above, this does NOT mean that the Bible is not “unique” – for it certainly is... just that the Bible ought to be read and understood in a way similar to reading and understanding any other book (utilizing normal sorts of reading to comprehend methods, taking into account the various literary forms found therein)...
 - (1) **Busenitz**, “Spanning from the law of Moses (written around 1400BC) to the final epistles of the NT (completed around 100AD), the 66 books of the Bible were written by some forty different human authors. They were written on three different continents (Asia, Europe, Africa) in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek) by men, many of whom did not know each other, and most of whom came from very different walks of life. For example, Moses was a prince (Ex 2:10, Heb 11:24-25) who became a shepherd (Ex 3:1); David was a shepherd (I Sam 16:11-13) who became the king (2 Sam 2:4). Jonah preached repentance to an enemy nation, and they listened (Jonah 3:4-5); Jeremiah preached repentance to his own nation, and they rejected him (Jer 32:1-15). Daniel was a government official (Dan 5:29); Ezra was a priest (Ezra 7:11), Isaiah was a prophet (2 Kings 20:1). Matthew was a tax collector (Matt 9:9); Paul was a former Pharisee (Phil 3:5); Luke was a Gentile physician (Col 4:14); and Peter was a Jewish fisherman (Matt 4:18). The men who wrote Scripture were a diverse group. Yet, in spite of those differences, including the various types of literature they wrote (from historic narrative to religious poetry to didactic treatises), the writings they produced express a perfect unity of thought.”
 - (2) **R.C. Sproul**, “[the Bible’s] consistency over centuries through the pens of multiple authors is nothing less than astonishing.”
 - (3) **McDowell**, “In unity these books teach the triunity of God, the deity of Jesus Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, the fall and depravity of man, as well as salvation by grace. It quickly becomes apparent that no human being(s) could have orchestrated the harmony of the teachings of the Scripture. The divine authorship of the Bible is the only answer.”
 - (4) The Bible, though, is to be read “normally” for it is truly both divine and human. While it communicates divine realities, it does so in earthly language. This all adds to the amazing uniqueness of scripture – God communicates to man using normal language, meant to be understood as such!
 - b. This does NOT mean that there are not puzzling, difficult to understand parts.
 - (1) **2 Peter 3:15b-16** “... just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, ¹⁶ 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.”
- (2) Not all parts of scripture are immediately easily understood... But it would be a grave mistake to then conclude that Scripture in general is difficult to understand.
 - (3) Even Peter here in context has just referred to Paul’s writings which he assumes his own readers have read, understood and profited from. He doesn’t say that there are things “impossible” to understand, only difficult – and he assigns blame on those who use that difficulty as an opportunity to twist and distort Scripture’s meaning “to their own destruction.”
 - (4) **Hodge**, “It is not denied that the Scriptures contain many things hard to be understood; that they require diligent study; that all men need the guidance of the Holy Spirit in order to right knowledge and true faith. But it is maintained in all things necessary to salvation they are sufficiently plain to be understood even by the unlearned.”
 - (5) **ORRB Confession** (Ch 5, Sect 7): “All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves ([2 Peter 3:16](#)), nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of ordinary means, may attain to a sufficient understanding of them ([Psalm 19:7](#); [Psalm 119:130](#))”
- c. Perspicuity has a relationship to almost every other theological doctrine:
 - (1) Theology Proper: How does the “incomprehensible” God reveal Himself clearly?
 - (2) Anthropology: How does man made in the image of God relate to perspicuity?
 - (3) Hamartiology: How has the Fall effected our understanding God’s Word clearly?
 - (4) Pneumatology: How does the H.S. impact our understanding of God’s Word?
 - (5) Bibliology: How does perspicuity impact our translation theory and methodology?
 - (6) Eschatology: How does perspicuity affect our understanding of prophecy?
 3. Put simply: Everything necessary for our salvation and Christian life and growth are clearly expounded in Scripture – the main doctrines of the Christian faith are very clear!
 - a. **Rolland McCune**, “While, in a general sense, the entirety of Scripture is essentially clear, perspicuity is technically argued only for the central message, comprising Scripture’s teaching about creation, the Fall into sin, the provision of redemption and the consummation in the eschaton (last things).”
 - b. The Bible presents a unified picture of God, mankind, sin, salvation, etc...
 - c. **Packer**, “Each book proceeded from the same divine mind, so that the teaching of the Bible’s sixty-six books will be complementary and self-consistent. If we cannot yet see this, the fault is in us, not in Scripture. It is certain that Scripture nowhere contradicts Scripture, rather, one passage explains another.”
 - d. Every specific passage is ultimately consistent with the whole message of Scripture – this is part of the foundation of “sola scriptura” – Scripture interprets Scripture – called the “analogy of Scripture or analogy of Faith.”
 - e. **ORRB Confession** (Ch 5, Sect 9): The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself ([2 Peter 1:20-21](#); [Acts 15:15-16](#)); and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture which is not manifold, but one, it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.

4. **Grudem**, “The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God’s help and being willing to follow it.”
5. The doctrine of perspicuity of Scripture teaches that “the meanings of the text can be clear to the ordinary reader, that God uses the text of the Bible to communicate His person and will.” “The witness of the Church throughout the ages is that ordinary people, who approach it in faith and humility, will be able to understand what the Bible is getting at, even if they meet with particular points of difficulty here and there.”
6. **Callahan**, “Scripture can be used and is read with profit, with appreciation and transformative results. It is open and transparent to earnest readers; it is intelligible and comprehensible to attentive readers. Scripture itself is coherent and obvious. It is direct and unambiguous as written; what is written is sufficient. Scripture’s concern of focal point is readily presented as the redemptive story of God. It displays a progressively more specific identification of that story, culminating in the gospel of Jesus Christ. All this is to say: Scripture is clear about what it is about.”

B. *Defending Perspicuity*

1. The doctrine of perspicuity stands against hermeneutical oddities, for it has huge implications on our approach to Scripture. God’s Word actually provides us with teaching on God’s Word! What a blessing – we are not left to our own opinions here... God’s Word is clear about its own clarity! ☺
 - a. There are passages which speak of the inherent illuminating ability of Scripture:
 - (1) **Psalm 19:8** The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.
 - (2) **Psalm 119:105** Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.
 - (3) **Psalm 119:130** The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple [one who is not only lacking intellectual ability, but prone to making mistakes, one easily led astray]. – this is how clear and understandable God’s Word is! No believer should ever feel himself too foolish to read Scripture and understand it sufficiently to be made wise by it!
 - (4) **Proverbs 6:23** For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life
 - (5) **2 Peter 1:19a** *So* we have the prophetic word *made* more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place...
 - b. Scripture is “able”
 - (1) **2 Timothy 3:15** and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.
 - (2) **James 1:21** Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.
 - c. There are passages where perspicuity is assumed:
 - (1) God commands Israel to obey His covenant by stressing its inherent clarity: **Deut 30:11-14** "For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. 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?'

- ¹³ "Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?' ¹⁴ "But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it."
- (2) **Grudem** points out that in His earthly ministry **Jesus** never excuses people's problems by explaining the Scripture was "unclear" on the subject. Instead, His responses assume blame for misunderstanding any teaching of Scripture is a person's failure to understand and accept what had been written. "have you not read..." (Matt 12:3, 5, 19:14, 22:31), "Have you never read in the scriptures (Matt 21:42), or even, "You are wrong because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Matt 22:29).
 - (3) Peter exhorts immature Christians to "long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow" (**1 Pet 2:2**). With this statement he implies that key to a believer's growth is personal time spent in God's Word!
 - (4) **The noble-minded Jews of Berea: Acts 17:10-12** "The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹ Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily *to see* whether these things were so. ¹² Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men." – their positive spiritual condition was due to "eager examination of the Scriptures."
 - (5) It is even interesting to note that the NT writers have no problem with expecting even "gentile Christians" to be able to read a translation of the OT in their own language and understand it rightly (Rom 4:1-25, 1 Cor 10:1-11, 2 Tim 3:16-17).
- d. Scripture never gives the impression that its meaning is intended to be hidden from the average believer, due to his inherent inability to understand!
- (1) The Scriptures are plain and clear...
 - (2) The H.S. works in harmony with the Scriptures to illuminate the mind of believers to truly understand God's Word rightly! (involves not only apprehension, but love of God's truth, and obedience to that truth.
 - (3) **Hodge**, "The Bible is a plain book. It is intelligible by the people."
- e. And positively, Scripture commands men search the Scriptures and requires men to believe and behave rightly!
- (1) The "blessed man" whom Israel was to emulate meditated on God's law day & night: **Psalms 1:1-2** How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! ² But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.
 - (2) The obligations of faith and obedience are personal! God will hold each man personally responsible for obeying or failing to obey Him. Each man must answer for himself, and since this is so, each man must judge for himself. It won't avail in the day of judgment to blame parents or priests or governors... you will bear responsibility for your own beliefs and behaviors!
 - o Implied in **Galatians 1:8-9** "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! ⁹ As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!"

- Christians must sit in judgment of the teaching they receive (even the teaching of apostles) for anything that didn't coincide with what God had already verified was to be rejected...
- To fail to do so is to bring judgment on yourself!
- (3) The scriptures are addressed to all believers, not to elders/deacons exclusively or specially... While there are passages which have specific application to elders, for example, even these are meant for the body of Christ generally – all of Scripture edifies the entire body, and the entire body needs to be familiar with all of Scripture!
- (4) **Paul explained to the Ephesian elders: Acts 20:27** “For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.”
- (5) The epistles of the NT adamantly illustrate this: **Hodge** lists examples, “to the called of Jesus Christ,” “to those called to be saints,” “to the beloved of God,” “to the sanctified in Christ Jesus,” “to all who call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord,” “to the saints which are in (Ephesus),” “to the faithful in Jesus Christ,” or “to the saints and faithful brethren which are in (Colossae).” “To them are directed these profound discussions of Christian doctrine, and these comprehensive expositions of Christian duty. They are everywhere assumed to be competent to understand what is written, and are everywhere required to believe and obey what thus came from the inspired messengers of Christ.”
- f. Not only this, but God's people are also responsible to pass on God's truth!
 - (1) *Responsibility of every parent (not merely the priests or rulers): Deut 6:6-9*
 "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your sons 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 up. ⁸ "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. ⁹ "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.
 - (2) God intended from the very beginning to give His truth to His people that they would be diligent to know that truth and pass it on to succeeding generations!
- 2. Over the centuries there have been countless attacks upon the “clarity of Scripture.”
 - **Larry Pettegrew**, “Clarity of Scripture is denied by every false theology, usually putting a priesthood, a cult's founder, an inner light, a critical methodology, or a postmodern hermeneutic between the Scriptures and the Christian.”
 - This doctrine is in contrast to other positions like that of the Roman Catholic Church, which asserts that Scripture is imperspicuous (unclear) apart from the interpretative framework of the Catholic church and tradition, and of positions like that of Postmodernism and Mormonism, which assert that subjective experience should be preferred over knowing the originally intended meaning of scripture, since it is basically unclear.
- a. *Against the Early Church Fathers*
 - (1) While they defended the canonicity of the OT (against men like Marcion), they in effect denied its clarity in a couple of ways...
 - (2) They employed allegorical interpretations of the OT (undercutting its literal meaning)

- (3) They subordinated the OT to the NT... the OT was not in itself perspicuous for faith and practice – it must be read through the paradigm of the NT
 - By the way this sort of practice sometimes can be seen in covenantal theology where the OT is read through and only through the lens of the NT – thereby doing great harm to the grammatical-historical meaning of the OT and failing to really observe the “progressive” nature of revelation.
 - Both the OT and NT must be seen as perspicuous as they stand, and meanwhile contributing to one over-arching unity.
- b. *Against the Roman Catholic Position*
 - (1) Later on, the RC position went as far as to argue that “the authority to judge and declare what the literal sense of Scripture is rests in the church alone” (Jean Gerson - 1429).
 - (2) Foundational to the Reformer’s beliefs was a strong belief in the “perspicuity of scripture”
 - (3) The Famous argument from Martin Luther in “The Bondage of the Will” – a response to Erasmus’ “The Freedom of the Will” – **see attached handout**
 - It was Luther’s belief in the clarity of Scripture that helped motivate him not only to translate the Bible into common German, but also to become a strong advocate for public education. He did so because, on the one hand, he wanted an educated clergy, trained in Greek, Hebrew and the humanities (as he understood them), while on the other hand he also wanted an educated laity. However, Luther’s commitment to education for laity did not arise out of the same concerns that motivate secular people today, namely, the earthly desire to have a lucrative career where one might make a lot of money. Instead, Luther’s commitment to public education arose out of his bad experience with ecclesiastical hierarchy that could so easily go astray chasing unbiblical rabbits, as it were, such as indulgences, and persecuting reformers who merely preached the Word. As a result, Luther believed that an educated laity, well grounded in the Bible, basic interpretive fundamentals, and the basics of the Christian faith (as in the Small Catechism) would stand a better chance of holding pastors and the church hierarchy accountable.
 - Cochlaeus, a champion of Roman Catholicism, paid Luther’s translation of the Bible the greatest compliment when he complained that “Luther’s New Testament was so much multiplied and spread by printers that even tailors and shoemakers, yea, even women and ignorant persons who had accepted this new Lutheran gospel, and could read a little German, studied it with the greatest avidity as the fountain of all truth. Some committed it to memory, and carried it about in their bosom. In a few months such people deemed themselves so learned that they were not ashamed to dispute about faith and the gospel not only with Catholic laymen, but even with priests and monks and doctors of divinity.”
 - Luther’s debate in 1519 with Eck at Leipzig at which Luther said, “I have the right to believe freely, to be a slave to no man’s authority, to confess what appears to be true whether it is proved or disproved, whether it is spoken by Catholic or by heretic... In matters of faith I think that neither counsel nor Pope nor any man has the power over my conscience. And where they disagree

with Scripture, I deny Pope and council and all. A simple layman armed with Scripture is greater than the mightiest Pope without it.”

- (4) **Turretin**, “We acknowledge such means [H.S., attention, church, lectures, commentaries, prayers, etc] are not only useful but also normally are necessary, but we want to deny any obscurity that keeps the common people from reading Scripture, as if it were harmful or dangerous, or that leads to a falling back on traditions when one should have taken a stand on Scripture alone.”
- (5) And so, the Council of Trent (Counter-Reformation) defended Gerson’s view officially – “no one, relying on his own skill shall... wrestle the sacred Scriptures to his own senses, presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church – whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures...”
- (6) *Present day argument* from a Roman Catholic: “But what could possibly be imagined as more fatal to this abstract view than more than 20,000 denominations? The Bible is indeed more often than not quite clear when approached open-mindedly and with a moral willingness to accept its teachings. I assume this myself, even as a Catholic. But in actual fact many Christians (and also heretics or "cultists") distort and misunderstand the Bible, or at the very least, arrive at contradictory, but sincerely held convictions. This is the whole point from the Catholic perspective. Error is necessarily present wherever disagreements exist—clearly not a desirable situation, as all falsehood is harmful (for example, John 8:44, 16:13, 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12, 1 John 4:6). Perspicuity (much like Protestantism as a whole) might theoretically be a good thing in principle, and on paper, but in practice it is unworkable and untenable... Whether one accepts the Tradition and teachings of the Catholic Church or not, at least it courageously takes a stand on any given doctrine and refuses to leave whole areas of theology and practice perpetually up for grabs, at the mercy of the "priesthood of scholars" and the individual’s private judgment—which in turn often reduces to mere whim, fancy, or subjective preference, usually divorced from considerations of Christian history and consensus. For this so-called "dogmatism" and lack of "flexibility," the Catholic Church is often reviled and despised. But for those of us who are seeking to be faithful to Christ within its fold, this is regarded, to the contrary, as its unique glory and majesty, much preferable to the morass of competing truth-claims (i.e., relativism) which prevail within Protestantism (even among the subgroup of evangelicals). Orthodox Catholics believe that Christians can place full confidence in the firmly-established Tradition which is found not only in Holy Scripture, but in the received doctrines of the Catholic Church, appointed by our Lord Jesus Christ as the Guardian and Custodian of *the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints* (Jude 3)
 - But it’s not as if all “RC theologians” throughout history have agreed on everything either! Man’s interpretations do not all have to be the same to support the perspicuity of Scripture!
 - **Hank Hanegraff**, "When the Protestant Reformers spoke about the perspicuity of Scripture, they meant that the Bible was clear when it came to its central message. Contrary to the dominant Roman Catholic idea which said that the Bible was difficult and obscure, Protestants said that anyone who is literate

could comprehend the gospel and the Scriptures. The Reformers were not saying that all of Scripture was equally understandable or even that scholarly study wasn't necessary, what they were saying was that the essential clarity of the Word of God was self-evident. Bottom line, they were saying that the Roman idea, that the Magisterium, (or the teaching office) of the church was the only one that could interpret Scripture, was simply in error. Responsible interpretation of the Bible by those in the pews was not only accepted, but also encouraged.”

- Christians who promote the clarity of the Bible encourage others to read it for themselves. Those who deny the perspicuity of the Bible have not historically encouraged a personal devotional time of studying the Bible, and have even “denied free access to the Scriptures lest [others] interpret them improperly and disseminate false doctrine.”
 - **Gerald Bray**, “Belief in the perspicuity of the Bible is ancient, going back to Jesus himself, who reproached the scribes and Pharisees, for not understanding the plain meaning of the text. As a doctrine, the perspicuity of Scripture was expressed by many of the Church Fathers, who contrasted it with the mystical writings of the Gnostics, which only the initiated could fathom.”
- c. *Against the Emergent Church*
- (1) A new movement is now arising in evangelical circles. Apparently, the main object of attack will be the perspicuity of Scripture.
 - (2) Influenced by postmodern notions about language, meaning, subjectivity, and truth, many younger evangelicals are questioning whether the Word of God is clear enough to justify certainty or dogmatism on points of doctrine.
 - (3) *See Additional Notes on this issue...*
- d. *Reader Response Hermeneutics*
- (1) There are those who believe the modern day reader is the one responsible for giving the text meaning... There is no meaning apart from what the reader gives.
 - (2) This is seen in “small group bible studies” where the most repeated question is: “What does this text mean to you??” – and multitudes of answers are permitted – in fact, to “disagree” with someone’s “meaning” is the worst possible scenario.
 - (3) Instead our discussion ought to be obsessed with “what does the text mean?” – the goal of the interpreter is to arrive at God’s intended meaning, not one’s own.
- e. *Bible Code Hermeneutics*
- (1) Proponents of such interpretive approaches believe that the key to understanding God’s message in scripture is proper use of their home brewed “decoder ring...”
 - (2) **Packer**, “Each book was written not in a code but in a way that could be understood by the readership to which it was addressed. This is true even of the books that primarily use symbolism: Daniel, Zechariah, Revelation. The main thrust is always clear, even if the details are clouded.”

C. *Discussing Perspicuity*

1. So, why do people misunderstand Scripture?
 - a. **Grudem**, “The problem always lies not with Scripture but with ourselves.”
 - b. **Luther**, “Therefore come forward, you and all the Sophists together, and produce any one mystery which is still abstruse in the Scriptures. But, if many things still remain

abstruse to many, this does not arise from obscurity in the Scriptures, but from their own blindness or want of understanding, who do not go the way to see the all-perfect clearness of the truth . . . Let, therefore, wretched men cease to impute, with blasphemous perverseness, the darkness and obscurity of their own heart to the all-clear scriptures of God”

c. The Unbelieving:

- (1) The biggest problem for the unredeemed is an unregenerate heart, and unenlightened eyes!
- (2) **2 Cor 4:3-4** And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”
- (3) **Rom 8:6-8** “For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷ because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”
- (4) **1 Corinthians 2:14** But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.
- (5) **Packer**, “Spiritual understanding—that is, the discernment of the reality of God, his ways with humankind, his present will, and one’s own relationship to Him now and for the future—will not however reach us from the text until the veil is removed from our hearts and we are able to share the writer’s own passion to know and please and honor God (2 Cor 3:16, 1 Cor 2:14). Prayer that God’s Spirit may generate this passion in us and show us God in the text is needed here.”

d. The Saved:

- (1) It is only the Lord who plants a hunger for the Word in people (1 Pet 2:2).
- (2) It is only the Lord who causes a man to seek God’s Word as a treasure (Prov 2:4)
 - See Job 28... This perspective is only had by those who love the Lord!
- (3) It also the Lord’s work of grace upon our hearts that causes us to desire to obey His Word – rendering obedience unto our great God and Savior!
- (4) But even given these manifestations of God’s grace, we still can disagree...
 - This has led to a whole “separate” field of inquiry entitled “hermeneutics” (coming from the Gr. word *hermeneuo* – to interpret).
 - This is the study of correct methods of interpretation (which we’ll look at in our last section of notes on God’s Revealing Work).
 - When an interpreters acts on those principles of interpretation on a particular text it is called “exegesis” – drawing out the meaning from the text!
- (5) So what are the causes for disagreement in interpretations?
 - We may desire an answer for something which Scripture is silent – in such cases we need to be very careful to extend Christian charity towards differing viewpoints.
 - We may have made a mistake in our interpretation of Scripture. It’s not that Scripture is unclear, but that our understanding can be incorrect. In such cases we need to sincerely ask the Lord for help, and search the scriptures all the more, believing that God will enable us to understand rightly. We can even be

thankful for the larger Christian community for the safeguards it provides against faulty interpretations.

- **Grudem**, “Christians must never give up to the scholarly ‘experts’ the task of interpreting Scripture: they must keep doing it every day for themselves.”
- This is not an individualistic process, but it is a process Christians are commanded to participate in!
- We can also note that despite the differences Christians have, a vast amount of doctrinal agreement on the most central tenets of our faith is astoundingly seen throughout the history of the Church. We can find this even today in traveling to other parts of the world – find a believer and you’ll have the most important things in common!

2. So what role do pastors/teachers/scholars have in Biblical Studies?

a. The Importance of Teaching is Clearly Given in Scripture:

- (1) Jesus engaged in teaching people, both publicly (i.e. sermon on the mount) and privately (i.e. road to Emmaus Lk 24:27).
- (2) God has gifted the church w/ gifted men – **Ephesians 4:11-12** And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers,¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;
- (3) Even John’s famous words: **1 John 2:27** “As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him” are themselves teaching!
- (4) **Acts 17:10-12a** (which we’ve already mentioned above) depicts men who were true OT saints who knew God under the terms of the OT and therefore treasured the news of the gospel when it came to them – notice that they conducted an “investigation.” [no haphazard study – thorough, diligent]
- (5) **2 Timothy 2:15** “Be diligent to present yourself approved [proven, tested] to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling [lit. cutting straight] the word of truth. – the picture here is one of solidity found through diligence!
- (6) **1 Timothy 5:17** depicts the sort of effort needed: “The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard [labor to the point of exhaustion] at preaching and teaching.”

b. **Grudem** offers a couple of other practical helps that “scholars” bring to Christians:

- (1) They *explore* new areas of understanding the teachings of Scripture. This exploration will seldom (if ever) involve denial of the main teachings the church has held throughout its centuries – application of Scripture to new areas of life...
- (2) They *defend* the teachings of the Bible against attacks by other scholars. One role of teaching is correcting false teachings and providing other believers w/ helps in defending the faith. **Titus 1:9** “holding fast the faithful word ... so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”
- (3) They *supplement* the study of Scripture for the benefit of the church. Bible scholars often have training that enables them to relate the teachings of Scripture to the rich history of the church, and make the interpretation of Scripture more precise and its meaning more vivid (knowledge of languages and ancient cultures).

II. The Necessity of Scripture

A. Defining Necessity

1. A Necessity is something which is essential, indispensable, or requisite...
 - a. When applied to Scripture, we are speaking about what Scripture is essential for.
 - b. At the outset of our study we explained that our inquiry regarding necessity would be, “Is the Bible necessary to know God?”
2. **Again let’s look at the ORRB Confession** (Ch 5, Sect 1): “The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, inerrant, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience (2 Timothy 3:15-17; Luke 16:29, 31; Ephesians 2:20), 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 inexcusable (Romans 1:19-21; Romans 2:14-15; Psalm 19:1-3); yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of his will which is necessary unto salvation (Psalm 19:7-9; Luke 24:27, 44; Hebrews 1:1). Therefore it pleased the Lord at various times and in diverse manners to reveal himself, and to declare his will unto his church; and afterward for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan, and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing (Proverbs 22:19-21; Romans 15:4; 2 Peter 1:19-20); which makes the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary, those former ways of God’s revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.”
3. This statement not only asserts the Scriptures to be “necessary” twice, but also provides us with an explanation as to what Scripture is necessary for.
 - a. The term “necessary” is used so loosely that we have to take care with the term.
 - b. For example, money is necessary for me to fill up my car with gas so I could come to church this morning, but I could choose to find another way here (hitch a ride, ride a bike, walk, etc) that would make money no longer “necessary” for this morning’s arrival at church.
 - c. Similarly, I could posit that electricity was necessary for the compilation of these notes (and that be true for I used a computer, printer, and electric light... not to mention a comfortably air conditioned office... all of which fail to operate without electricity) to compose and publish this document. However, we are all aware that the work could have been done with pencil and paper during the daylight hours or through use of candlelight.
 - d. The point is that we all too often confuse “absolute necessity” with “relative necessity”
4. From the outset, we must recognize that Scripture holds the place of “absolute necessity”... but in reference to what?
 - a. The reference point is also important to clarify. For example, wind is necessary for windmills to generate power, but wind is not necessary to prove the existence of air.
 - b. Here the principle is that just because something is necessary for one thing, does not at all mean it is necessary for anything else.
 - c. And stated in reverse, just because something is NOT necessary for one thing, does NOT mean it is necessary for nothing.
5. With this established, we can begin to articulate what we mean by *Necessity of Scripture*
6. *I like Grudem’s Definition*: “The necessity of Scripture means that the Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God’s will, but is not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God’s character and moral laws.”

B. Discussing Necessity

1. The Bible is NOT necessary to know God exists and something of His Character.
 - a. When the Necessity of Scripture is put forward some might object that Scripture is not *necessary* to know God because they had a *feeling, impression, belief* regarding His existence even before being confronting with scripture. Some might point to tribal peoples (for example) who have never heard the Scriptures and meanwhile have beliefs regarding the existence of one greater than themselves.
 - b. As a matter of fact Scripture itself explains that knowledge of God is clearly manifest through Creation itself:
 - (1) **Psalm 19:1-6** “The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. ² Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge. ³ There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard. ⁴ Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their utterances to the end of the world. In them He has placed a tent for the sun, ⁵ Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; It rejoices as a strong man to run his course. ⁶ Its rising is from one end of the heavens, And its circuit to the other end of them; And there is nothing hidden from its heat.”
 - From the very beginning the Scriptures are not written from the defensive, attempting to prove God’s existence – the Bible assumes this to be self-evidently true – an axiomatic truth!
 - An axiom is a statement which itself does not need proof which serves as the basis or starting point from which other statements are logically derived.
 - Simply put, if God does not exist than nothing else could. All of our lives are dependent upon One who has life in Himself and has chosen to grant life. Logically and Philosophically speaking there must have been a starting point for the physical universe – this is self-evident – and since matter is not itself eternal, there must be One who in eternity, according to His most holy and wise counsel, decided to create the heavens and the earth.
 - **Genesis 1:1** is an elegant verse which supplies us with all the items necessary to describe how everything made came into existence: “In the beginning (time) God (agent, force) created (action) the heavens (space) and the earth (matter).”
 - **The Bible tells us what an Atheist is: Ps 14:1** “The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God..." A fool is one who ignores all the plain evidence and persists in believing that which is a lie instead of that which is absolutely true! **Spurgeon**, “He who looks up to the firmament and then writes himself down an atheist, brands himself at the same moment as an idiot or a liar.”
 - And Psalm 19 explains that to persist in unbelief regarding God’s existence is to ignore the ongoing declaration of all of Creation! Whether during the day or night, God has filled the sky with ever-present reminders of His nature and character!
 - Astronomers might be more knowledgeable about the vastness and complexity of the universe than we, but still, just one look into the sky confronts us with things beyond comprehension, things too wonderful for us...
 - **Not only is God’s existence clear** but the heavens make declaration to His **power, infinitude, wisdom, beauty, providential care, consistency, and faithfulness (to name a few) are put on a marvelous display!**
 - **C.H. Spurgeon said**, “Every moment God’s existence, power, wisdom, and goodness are being sounded abroad by the heavenly heralds which sine upon us from above. He who would guess at divine sublimity [vast greatness] should gaze upward into the starry vault; he who would imagine infinity must peer into the boundless expanse; he who desires to see divine wisdom should consider the balancing of the orbs; he who would know divine fidelity (trustworthiness) must mark the regularity of the planetary motions; and he who would attain some conceptions of divine power, greatness, majesty, must estimate the forces of attraction, the magnitude of fixed stars, and the brightness of the whole celestial train... It is not merely glory that the heavens declare, but the ‘glory of God,’ for they deliver to us such unanswerable

- arguments for a conscious, intelligent, planning, controlling, and presiding Creator, that no unprejudiced person can remain unconvinced by them.”
- NO ONE escapes this witness... v4 explains that “their line (the path they trace) goes out through all the earth and their utterances to the end of the world... v6 explains that the sun (in particular) rising from one end of the heavens and travels to the other end of them... and even adds in case you can’t see that even your sense of touch is involved – nothing is hidden from its heat (whether that be for good in the sense of preventing the earth from freezing or for ill in the sense of scorching crops and the like – i.e. Houston Heat and Humidity ☺)...
 - I indicated that there is some discussion regarding the translation of v3. Some instead of seeing the verse as indicating the nature of the witness of the heavens (not literally vocal and yet communicates a message), explain it to communicate the scope of their witness. They translate “there is no speech nor are there words *where* their voice is not heard.” The idea of this translation [which follows the LXX (Gr. translation of the OT)] is that the Heb grammar might imply the word “where” and therefore mean that the message of the heavens is universally communicated to all people everywhere in a language that is universally recognized and understood.
 - **Calvin** says it so well, “The difference of languages is a barrier which prevents different nations from maintaining mutual intercourse, and it makes him who in his own country is distinguished for his eloquence, when he comes into a foreign country either dumb [unable to speak] or, if he attempt to speak, barbarous [not understood]. And even although a man could speak all languages, he could not speak to a Grecian and a Roman at the same time; for as soon as he began to direct his discourse to the one, the other would cease to understand him... but the heavens have a common language to teach all men without distinction...”
 - So ALL men are without excuse!
- (2) **Romans 1:18-21** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,¹⁹ because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.²⁰ 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.²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.
- Paul explains that creation continually bears witness to God’s existence and character, and even wicked men recognize the evidence!
 - Unbelievers do not fall due to lack of proof... they “suppress the truth in unrighteousness” – they fight against the plain evidence and are w/o excuse!
 - God has never left Himself w/o witness: **Acts 14:16-17** "In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways;¹⁷ and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."
 - "... He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous." [**Matt 5:45**]
- c. The point in all this is that people can know that God is and something about Him through their sheer existence within God’s Creation. So Scripture is not necessary for this knowledge (it can be known apart from Scripture)
- (1) But this knowledge is never said to be able to save one’s soul from condemnation!
 - (2) And our understanding of and response to Creation can be skewed due to sin!
2. The Bible is NOT necessary to know something of Moral Laws
- a. And besides the ever-present outward witness of Creation, God has also given all men an inward one as well – the Conscience, so that wicked men are doubly condemned.

- b. Paul continues his argument in this very way in **Romans 2:14-15** “For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves,¹⁵ in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,”
- c. God has “written” His Law upon the hearts of all humanity...
- (1) **Grudem**, “The fact that all people know something of God’s moral laws is a great blessing for society, for unless they did there would be no societal restraint on the evil that people would do and no restraint from their consciences. Because there is some common knowledge of right and wrong, Christians can often find much consensus with non-Christians in matters of civil law, community standards, basic ethics for business and professional activity, and acceptable patterns of conduct in ordinary life. Moreover, we can appeal to the sense of rightness within people’s hearts (Rom 2:14) when attempting to enact better laws or overturn bad laws, or to right some other injustices in society around us. The knowledge of God’s existence and character also provides a basis of information that enables the gospel to make sense to a non-Christian’s heart and mind: unbelievers know that God exists and that they have broken his standards, so the news that Christ died to pay for their sins should truly come as *good news* to them.”
 - (2) This is exactly C.S. Lewis’ approach to unbelievers in his explanation of *Mere Christianity*. Lewis believed the existence of “right and wrong” was a clue to the meaning of the universe. See the following excerpts from chapter 1.
 - Everyone has heard people quarreling. Sometimes it sounds funny and sometimes it sounds merely unpleasant; but however it sounds, I believe we can learn something very important from listening to the kind of things they say. They say things like this: 'How'd you like it if anyone did the same to you?'--'That's my seat, I was there first'--'Leave him alone, he isn't doing you any harm'--'Why should you shove in first?'--'Give me a bit of your orange, I gave you a bit of mine'--'Come on, you promised.' People say things like that every day, educated people as well as uneducated, and children as well as grown-ups. Now what interests me about all these remarks is that the man who makes them is not merely saying that the other man's behavior does not happen to please him. He is appealing to some kind of standard of behavior which he expects the other man to know about. And the other man very seldom replies: 'To hell with your standard.' Nearly always he tries to make out that what he has been doing does not really go against the standard, or that if it does there is some special excuse. He pretends there is some special reason in this particular case why the person who took the seat first should not keep it, or that things were quite different when he was given the bit of orange, or that something has turned up which lets him off keeping his promise. It looks, in fact, very much as if both parties had in mind some kind of Law or Rule of fair play or decent behavior or morality or whatever you like to call it, about which they really agreed. And they have. If they had not, they might, of course, fight like animals, but they could not quarrel in the human sense of the word. Quarreling means trying to show that the other man is in the wrong. And there would be no sense in trying to do that unless you and he had some sort of agreement as to what Right and Wrong are; just as there would be no sense in saying that a footballer had committed a foul unless there was some agreement about the rules of football.
 - This law was called the Law of Nature because people thought that everyone knew it by nature and did not need to be taught it. They did not mean, of course, that you might not find an odd individual here and there who did not know it, just as you find a few people who are color-blind or have no ear for a tune. But taking the race as a whole, they thought that the human idea of decent behavior was obvious to everyone. And I believe they were right. If they were not, then all the things we said about the war were nonsense. What was the sense in saying the enemy were in the wrong unless Right is a real thing which the Nazis at bottom knew as well

as we did and ought to have practiced? If they had had no notion of what we mean by right, then, though we might still have had to fight them, we could no more have blamed them for that than for the color of their hair.

- But the most remarkable thing is this. Whenever you find a man who says he does not believe in a real Right and Wrong, you will find the same man going back on this a moment later. He may break his promise to you, but if you try breaking one to him he will be complaining 'It's not fair' before you can say Jack Robinson. A nation may say treaties do not matter; but then, next minute, they spoil their case by saying that the particular treaty they want to break was an unfair one. But if treaties do not matter, and if there is no such thing as Right and Wrong--in other words, if there is no Law of Nature--what is the difference between a fair treaty and an unfair one? Have they not let the cat out of the bag and shown that, whatever they say, they really know the Law of Nature just like anyone else?
 - I hope you will not misunderstand what I am going to say. I am not preaching, and Heaven knows I do not pretend to be better than anyone else. I am only trying to call attention to a fact; the fact that this year, or this month, or, more likely, this very day, we have failed to practice ourselves the kind of behavior we expect from other people. There may be all sorts of excuses for us. That time you were so unfair to the children was when you were very tired. That slightly shady business about the money--the one you have almost forgotten--came when you were very hard up. And what you promised to do for old So-and-so and have never done--well, you never would have promised if you had known how frightfully busy you were going to be. And as for your behavior to your wife (or husband) or sister (or brother) if I knew how irritating they could be, I would not wonder at it--and who the dickens am I, anyway? I am just the same. That is to say, I do not succeed in keeping the Law of Nature very well, and the moment anyone tells me I am not keeping it, there starts up in my mind a string of excuses as long as your arm. The question at the moment is not whether they are good excuses. The point is that they are one more proof of how deeply, whether we like it or not, we believe in the Law of Nature. If we do not believe in decent behavior, why should we be so anxious to make excuses for not having behaved decently? The truth is, we believe in decency so much--we feel the Rule or Law pressing on us so--that we cannot bear to face the fact that we are breaking it, and consequently we try to shift the responsibility. For you notice that it is only for our bad behavior that we find all these explanations. It is only our bad temper that we put down to being tired or worried or hungry; we put our good temper down to ourselves
 - **So the two foundations upon which Lewis' argument rests are:** (1) Human beings cannot rid themselves of the idea that they ought to live a certain way (2) Human beings are aware they fail to live up to that standard.
- d. So, again, the Scriptures are not necessary to arrive at a belief in "right and wrong" – this is given to us by God's grace w/o specific need for scripture...
(1) But this knowledge is never said to be able to save one's soul from condemnation!
(2) And our conscience can be hardened and desensitized due to sin!
3. The Bible IS necessary to know the Gospel
- a. **Calvin**, "Therefore, though the effulgence [radiance] which is presented to every eye, both in the heavens and on the earth, leaves the ingratitude of man without excuse, since God, in order to bring the whole human race under the same condemnation, holds forth to all, without exception, a mirror of his Deity in his works, another and better must be given to guide us properly to God as Creator. Not in vain, therefore, has He added the light of His Word in order that He might make Himself known unto salvation, and bestowed the privilege on those whom He was pleased to bring into nearer and more familiar relation to Himself... It was necessary in passing from death unto life, that they should know God, not only as a Creator, but as a Redeemer also... the knowledge first given was that which made them acquainted with God by whom the world was made and is governed. To this first knowledge was afterward added the more intimate knowledge which alone quickens dead souls, and by which God is

known not only as the Creator of the world, and the sole author and disposer of all events, but also as a Redeemer, in the person of the Mediator.”

- b. Paul explains in **Romans 10:13-17** for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." ¹⁴ 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? ¹⁵ 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!" ¹⁶ However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?" ¹⁷ So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”
- (1) We can trace the flow of argument here: (1) To be saved, you must call on the name of the Lord. (2) To call on the Lord’s name, you must believe in Him. (3) To believe in Him, you must hear of Him (4) To hear of Him, there must be a preacher to tell you (5) For there to be a preacher, there must be those supporting and sending.
 - (2) The implication of all of the above is the “necessity” of gospel proclamation in order for one to be saved!
 - (3) The default position is one of condemnation: **John 3:18** “He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”
 - (4) **The next verse in Romans 10 is interesting: v18** “But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; "THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD.” (You should recognize this as a quotation from Ps 19).
 - o Some have argued that this means that all have heard the gospel message (aka about Jesus Christ)... but this is not the meaning – there are two possibilities:
 - o This verse could be a remembrance of Psalm 19’s context/meaning – Paul is just explaining to the Romans that mankind is universally held responsible for the knowledge they have been given (a shout back to Romans 1) bringing about condemnation – unless they flee to Jesus Christ.
 - o OR it could be an allusion to the “astronomical” events that accompanied Jesus’ birth, death, and resurrection. In such a case Paul is arguing for his hearers immediate experiences in connection with Jesus (and ties the miraculous phenomena in with a quotation to “celestial bodies” as spoken of in the OT). The point would be – even creation (by God’s design) bore witness to the Savior (extremely public events)! Like Paul’s argument to King Agrippa: **Acts 26:26** "For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner.”
- c. There is only one way to the Father – only one way of Salvation – only one means!
- (1) **John 14:6** Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.
 - (2) **Acts 4:12** "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

- (3) **Even for OT saints: Hebrews 11:13** All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.
 - (4) **Like Abraham: John 8:56** "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad."
 - d. Our faith rests on more than guesses... It is firmly founded upon God's promise of salvation – from the very beginning salvation is secured through faith in God's Word (the Son) as told by God's Word (the Scriptures). It is in trusting God that a man is saved!
4. The Bible IS necessary to grow in knowledge of and relationship with God
- a. Just as salvation is dependent upon God's Word, so our growth in relationship to the Lord is mediated through His Word!
 - b. Spiritual life is maintained through daily nourishment which the Scriptures provide!
 - (1) **Deuteronomy 8:3** "He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.
 - (2) **1 Peter 2:2** like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,
 - c. Because sin distorts our minds and consciences, we are in continual need of the renewing which God's Word provides – **Rom 12:2** "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."
 - (1) The Scriptures provide clear and definitive statements about what God is pleased with and what He hates!
 - (2) Out of a desire to please the Lord, we study His Word that we might obey!
 - (3) **1 John 5:3** For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.
 - (4) **Deuteronomy 29:29** "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."
 - (5) **Grudem** provides some great instruction, "In a fallen world knowledge gained by observation of the world is always imperfect and always liable to error or misinterpretation. Therefore the knowledge of God and creation gained from Scripture must be used to interpret correctly the creation around us... We need special revelation [scripture] to interpret general revelation [creation] rightly."
 - (6) **Chafer**, "There could be no extended or accurate apprehension of that revelation which nature affords apart from the divine interpretation of it which the Bible provides."
 - d. **Calvin**, "If we reflect how prone the human mind is to lapse into forgetfulness of God, how readily inclined to every kind of error, how bent every now and then on devising new and fictitious religions, it will be easy to understand how necessary it was to make such a depository of doctrine as would secure it from either perishing by the neglect, vanishing away amid the errors, or being corrupted by the presumptuous audacity of men... *Error never can be eradicated from the heart of man until the true knowledge of God has been implanted in it.*"

C. Defending Necessity

1. The doctrine of the Necessity of Scripture has been attacked
 - a. **Berkhof**, “Because the Church of Rome proceeds on the assumption that the Church takes precedence over Scripture, it cannot very well acknowledge the absolute necessity of the latter... While it does need tradition, it does not really need Scripture, no matter how useful this may be as a norm.”
 - b. **Besides the R.C. church**, there were some in the early church that similarly did not believe the Scriptures were necessary... mystical sects like the montanists believed the Bible was quite superfluous. And today we even find similar mystics who exalt private experience and impression above and beyond Scripture.
 - c. **Roman Catholics** argue that there was a time during which the NT did not exist and meanwhile the preaching of the gospel was occurring, and from this explain that it is the influence of the church that supersedes the written word.
 - d. **Berkhof** replies, “When the Reformers defended the necessity of Scripture over against Rome and the Anabaptists, they did not deny that the Church existed before Moses’ day, nor that the NT Church was in existence long before there was a canon of the NT. Neither did they defend the position that Scripture was *absolutely necessary*, in the sense that God could not have made man acquainted with the way of salvation in some other way. They considered Scripture to be necessary in virtue of the good pleasure of God to make the Word the seed of the Church. Even before the time of Moses the unwritten word served that purpose. And the NT did not come into existence apart from the spoken word of Jesus and the apostles. As long as these witnesses of the facts of redemption lived, there was little need of a written word, but when these fell away, this changed at once. The historical character of God’s revelation, the history of redemption, and the redemptive facts which did not admit of repetition, and were yet of the greatest significance for all coming generations, made it necessary to commit God’s special revelation to writing... In this sense of the word Reformed theology has always defended the necessity of Scripture.”
2. Why is this doctrine worthy of defense? What’s at stake?
 - a. Doctrinal Integrity
 - (1) The Scriptures are necessary to maintain doctrinal truth...
 - (2) Whenever the Scriptures are neglected, the church is exposed to great harm
 - b. Missionary Zeal
 - (1) The force of Paul’s argument in Romans 10 is based upon the necessity of the true gospel being preached – that others might hear, believe, and call upon Jesus!
 - (2) If Scriptural truth is not deemed necessary for salvation and growth in Christ, then a host of substitutes will take Scripture’s place – leaving people starving for spiritual sustenance!
3. **A Contemporary Case Study** – DO CHRISTIANS NEED “RULES” FOR CONVERSION?
 - a. The issue of the necessity of Scripture recently came to the forefront when the General Synod of the Church of England had a discussion centered on a single sentence motion put forth by traditionalist synod member Paul Eddy calling it to explicitly declare its aim of converting people to Christianity. That single sentence motion was met with a 66-page response and a heated debate.
 - b. The motion caused the church to question the place of “conversion talk,” evangelism, and mission in Christianity. Some were fervent in pleading for new measures such as bishops giving extra training and encouragement to clergy to evangelize non-Christians. Critics of the plan said that raising the issue and emphasizing the need for those “outside the faith” to convert will simply serve

to damage the Church's relations with members of other religions, including Muslims. The heat generated by the discussion led one bishop to condemn in anger the "evangelistic rants" that were going on. Why all the fuss?

- c. Anyone who is remotely familiar with the New Testament will have no doubt that the idea of evangelism and conversion is central to its message. From John the Baptist to Christ Himself to the Apostles the message was "Repent! For the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" The lost state of mankind and the need to flee from the wrath to come was at the heart of their message.
 - (1) Jesus gave the great commission to the church in **Matthew 28:18-20** saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
 - (2) Jesus gave a similar charge just before His ascension in **Acts 1:8**, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."
- d. Missionary fervor drove the apostle Paul to make his famous missionary journeys and the same fervor led to the rapid spread of the gospel witness all over the ancient world. The massive missionary efforts of the Christian church throughout the ages that continue until the present day are motivated by a desire to be obedient to the call of Christ to be His witnesses.
- e. This leads us to ask, if the Bible is so clear on an issue like this, why the confusion? Why all the debate about whether or not we should seek to evangelize or convert others?
- f. Lurking behind all of these issues are greater matters of worldview and fundamental theological beliefs one of which, we will discover, is disbelief in the necessity of Scripture. The previously mentioned 66-page official response from the Church of England contained a paragraph that was very telling in getting to the root of the problem: "The Church of England, and Anglicans more generally, have also taken the traditional doctrines of the Trinity and the incarnation as their basis for interfaith dialogue, holding that Jesus is the source of salvation for all people everywhere (*whether they are yet aware of the fact or not*), but also holding that Christians are called to be God's instruments in bringing people to explicit faith in Christ and to membership of his Church."
- g. That sentence, particularly the portion stating "Jesus is the source of salvation for all people everywhere (*whether they are yet aware of the fact or not*)," reveals that many feel that exposing people to the gospel and conversion to Christianity is totally unnecessary. The goal of missions then is not to expose people to the only news that can save them from hell to which they would otherwise be inescapably destined. The goal of missionary activity is to "be God's instruments in bringing people to explicit faith in Christ and to membership of his Church," that is, make explicit what was implicit or make people aware of the fact that they were already saved by Christ.
- h. This is a type of *theological inclusivism*, which completely denies the necessity of Scripture.
 - (1) **Exclusivism**—This view maintains both the ontological and epistemological necessity of Christ. That is, "ontologically" Jesus is the only ground of salvation, there is salvation in no one else, the only possible way for sin to be atoned for and reconciliation with God to take place is through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And "epistemologically" speaking you must also believe in Him. It is not enough that He died you must have faith in Him. Not only is he the only Savior but you must also believe in Him.
 - (2) **Inclusivism**—This view maintains the ontological necessity of Jesus but denies the epistemological necessity of knowing Him. They agree that salvation is only in Jesus but they deny that you need have faith in Him. You can be saved by Jesus and not know it.
 - (3) **Pluralism**—This view denies the ontological and epistemological necessity of Christ. That is, they say Jesus is not the only Savior and you, therefore, do not need to believe in Him.
- i. This inclusivistic view is at the heart of statements like, "Jesus is the source of salvation for all people everywhere (*whether they are yet aware of the fact or not*)... Christians are called to be God's instruments in bringing people to explicit faith in Christ." This sort of nonsense needs to be met with Scriptural arguments that show the absolute necessity of Scripture.

III. The Sufficiency of Scripture

A. *Introducing Sufficiency*

1. The issue of the Sufficiency of Scripture comes up practically in connection with the manner in which God's people are led by God...
2. **Romans 8:14** states, "all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God." All Christians by definition are people who are led by the Holy Spirit. The issue is not whether the Holy Spirit guides the children of God, but rather the means by which He does. While Charismatics have long referred to receiving a "word from the Lord" (special direct revelation), in recent years this phenomena has become prevalent across the denominational spectrum, usually couched in a phrase like "God told me." When seeking direction for one's life, many suggest that one should "ask the Lord about it for He will surely reveal the answer to you." Some go so far as to describe the practice of "laying out a fleece," following the example of Gideon (Judges 6:36-40), when seeking the "will of God for one's life."
3. Recently, an intensely popular teaching produced by Henry Blackaby and Claude King entitled, "Experiencing God," describes knowing and doing the will of God as finding where God is working and joining Him there. This search process is completed through analyzing signs which point to the working of the Lord. While the Bible is listed among these factors, God's will is sought also through circumstances, the church, and prayer. Blackaby and King insist that God speaks through all four of these means.¹
4. But Experiencing God provides just one example of the plethora of material revolving around discovering and living according to the will of God. James Boice humorously depicts the method by which many Christians seek guidance: *The Evangelical Hotline*. When calling in for help, one would hear the following:
 - a. If you are obsessive-compulsive, please press 1 repeatedly.
 - b. If you are codependent, please ask someone else to press 2.
 - c. If you have multiple personalities, please press 3, 4, 5, and 6.
 - d. If you are paranoid, we know who you are and what you want. Just stay on the line so we can trace the call.
 - e. If you are an evangelical, listen carefully and a little voice will tell you which number to press.²
5. I Kings 19:11-12 describes the process that most Christians believe to be the method by which God leads His people (the still quiet voice):
 - a. So [God] said, "Go forth and stand on the mountain before the Lord." And behold, the Lord was passing by! And a great and strong wind was rending the mountains and breaking in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but eh lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but he Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of a gentle blowing. It came about when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, a voice came to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"
 - b. I Kings 19 surely cannot be used for the basis of how the Holy Spirit leads the people of God. Hermeneutically speaking, proper rules of interpretation dictate that narrative passages be interpreted in light of clear didactic scriptures. A careful look at how the New Testament describes the leading of the Holy Spirit will be largely helpful in understanding how to interpret the experience that Elijah had on that mountain. The mystical approach to God's leading supposedly supported by this passage has led many to speak of guidance in the terms, "I prayed about it, and God told me..." Boice rightly points out that "in former days, a

¹ Henry Blackaby and Claude King, *Experiencing God*, 83.

² James Boice, *Whatever Happened to the Gospel of Grace?* 81.

statement like that would be followed by a more mature believer asking for ‘chapter and verse,’ meaning ‘where do you find that in Scripture?’”³

6. People are frequently frustrated in attempting to know how to correctly make decisions such as who to marry, what job to take, what school to attend, where to live, etc. People want straightforward answers and easy solutions. Grudem explains that “Christians have little confidence in their ability to discover God’s will with any degree of certainty” and thus “there is little striving to do God’s will (for who can know it?) and little growth in holiness before the Lord.”⁴ The rise of “evangelical mysticism” (still quiet voice guidance) can be attributed to a loss of understanding of the Sufficiency of Scripture. MacArthur rightly describes, “Those who aren’t convinced the Bible is a sufficient revelation of truth will be continually looking elsewhere for more ‘revelation’ and new mystical experiences.”⁵ This inevitably leads us to a discussion of the Holy Spirit’s leading and guidance. It is the contention of this paper that the Holy Spirit’s means of guiding the people of God is the Word of God. This belief stems from an understanding of the Sufficiency of Scripture which will be defined and defended.
7. Sinclair Ferguson rightly explains three reasons why so much attention has been placed on direct personal revelation rather than revelation through the Scriptures:
 - a. It is more exciting to have direct revelation rather than Bible revelation. It seems more “spiritual,” more “divine.”
 - b. For many people, it feels much more authoritative to be able to say, “God has revealed this to me,” than to say, “The Bible tells me so.”
 - c. Direct revelation relieves us of the need for painstaking Bible study and careful consideration of Christian doctrine in order to know the will of God. In comparison to immediate revelation, Bible study seems—to be frank—boring.⁶

B. Defining Sufficiency

1. John ends his gospel by explaining, “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” (John 21:25). It is clear that the Bible does not contain everything that Jesus did, but this has no impact on our understanding of Biblical Sufficiency. Scripture indicates other occasions as well when less than complete record is given of a particular event or situation (1 Kings 4:32-34, 1 Cor 5:9, 1 Col 4:16, 2 Thess 2:5), but this again does not negate the doctrine of Sufficiency. Many people discount this important doctrine on improper grounds. A good working definition is in order.
2. However we define Sufficiency we must not negate the fact of “progressive revelation.” These doctrines are in harmony with each other. No matter what the time in God’s revealing of Himself, sufficiency holds true – whatever God has given is sufficient for His people at that time.
 - a. When God gave his commands to Adam and Eve in the garden, telling them to be fruitful and multiply, fill and subdue the earth, and eat freely of the trees of the garden except from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that revelation was sufficient for Adam and Eve’s needs. They were to neither add to nor take away from God’s Word.
 - b. Then, when God chose to reveal Himself specially to the Israelites many years later, the books of Moses were sufficient for their early days as a nation (see Deut 4:2, 12:32). The Israelites were under similar constraints to neither add nor subtract from God’s Word – being faithful to what was contained therein (whatever had been revealed).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 133.

⁵ John MacArthur Jr., *Think Biblically*, 23.

⁶ Sinclair Ferguson, “Spirit of Light.” *Tabletalk*, 16.

- c. Years later, the same declaration would be made in Proverbs 30:5-6 “Every word of God proves true; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to his words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.”
 - d. And then after the 1st coming of Jesus Christ (the Word made flesh) and the instructions given through the apostles, at the end of Revelation we once again read, “I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: *if anyone adds to them*, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and *if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy*, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book (Rev 22:18-19).
 - e. Even though, the content of revelation has increased over the years by God’s decision to reveal Himself progressively, whatever God’s people needed to please Him at that time of history was provided. Hebrews makes this point plain, “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son...” (1:1-2).
3. Webster’s Dictionary defines sufficient as “adequate for the purpose; enough.”⁷ More specifically, when speaking of Biblical Sufficiency we mean that “the Bible is an adequate guide for all matters of faith and conduct.”⁸
 4. Unlike many systematic theology books, Wayne Grudem dedicates a chapter solely to the understanding of the Sufficiency of Scripture. He gives a more expansive definition worth noting. “The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God He intended His people to have at each stage of redemptive history and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting Him completely, and for obeying Him perfectly.”⁹
 5. **ORRB Confession** (Ch 5, Sect 6): “The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit, or traditions of men (2 Timothy 3:15-17; Galatians 1:8-9). 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 (John 6:45; 1 Corinthians 2:9-12), and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed (1 Corinthians 11:13-14; 1 Corinthians 14:26, 40).”

C. Defending Sufficiency

1. James Draper Jr. and Kenneth Keathley posit three dangers associated with the departure from believing in the Sufficiency of Scripture.
 - a. First, there is the danger of adding to the Word of God. This can be seen in the Catholic church with their reliance upon church counsels, popes, and traditions for what is to be believed. Jesus, during his earthly ministry, rejected the oral traditions current in His time as human inventions (Matt 5:21-48), not worthy to be obeyed as God’s Word – being false interpretations and applications. This is also seen in the mystical approach already addressed.
 - b. Second, there is the danger of replacing the Word of God. This is prevalent today when people have substituted psychology for preaching, addressing “felt needs” versus spiritual ones.
 - c. Third, there is the danger of displacing the Word. Draper and Keathly point to this danger as the most subtle for it involves the removal of the Word of God from the worship services. This can be done in many ways, from decreasing the time set aside for reading and preaching

⁷ "Sufficient," in *Random House Webster's Dictionary*, 1993.

⁸ MacArthur, *Think Biblically*, 22.

⁹ Grudem, 127.

- the Word of God to removing it from the decision making process, the church doing what works (pragmatism), not necessarily what is instructed by the Lord.¹⁰
- d. Given the above definition regarding the Sufficiency of Scripture, it is important to ascertain if this is indeed what the Bible teaches. Understanding the nature of Scripture serves as the foundation of the doctrine of Scripture's Sufficiency. This provides us with opportunity for a quick review!
2. The Uniqueness of Scripture
 - a. Defending the sufficiency of scripture begins with understanding inspiration and inerrancy. If these two doctrines are rightly understood, sufficiency is a necessary corollary. "Just as the doctrine of inerrancy of Scripture logically leads to belief in its authority, even so the doctrine of the authority of the Bible necessitates the confidence that the Scriptures are sufficient."¹¹
 - b. James Garrett provides a good starting place: "Ultimate truth and the authority of that truth rest in God Himself, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus as the Son of God is the supreme earthly and historical embodiment of divine truth (John 14:6), and Jesus both attributed truth to God the Father (John 3:34-35, 5:36b-37a) and promised that it would be made available through "the Spirit of truth" (John 16:13). So for Christians... the issue is not whether truth does indeed rest in and derive from God, but instead how and where this divine truth is faithfully and responsibly transmitted or communicated to humans, and especially to Christians."¹²
 - c. Jesus is referred to as the "divine Word" and many have made much of learning from the Word, meaning Jesus, through direct revelation, setting this in opposition to the "stale truths" about Jesus presented in the Scriptures. Here lies a faulty contrast. Surely Jesus is "the way, and the truth, and the life," and being a Christian is knowing Him, loving Him, and obeying Him. Insuring that we are following the Word is important. Harold Lindsell rightly explains that the written Word and the divine Word are "inextricably and forever interrelated."¹³ To separate Jesus from the Scriptures is to misunderstand both the divine and written Word of God. "The only incarnate Word we can know, the only incarnate God who has revealed Himself in Scripture is the Jesus of Scripture."¹⁴ There is no other Jesus than the Biblical One. Without this standard, Jesus ceases to be an objectively verifiable, historical person. This opens the floodgates for everyone to concoct their own Jesus according to their own tastes, the very heart of idolatry (following a god of the imagination).
 - d. In the work of inspiration, God produced in Scripture (the autographs specifically) the very words He desired (verbal plenary). The Bible is not man's ideas or speculations about God, but what God has said about Himself. This understanding of inspiration leads us to also believe in Biblical Inerrancy and Infallibility. Inerrancy means the Bible is without error, while Infallibility explains that the Bible is a sure, reliable, trustworthy guide. "Inerrancy is a corollary to the full inspiration of the Bible."¹⁵
 - e. The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy states: "We affirm that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all matters it addresses. We deny that it is possible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated."¹⁶
 - f. Sproul defines infallibility as "not capable of erring" (potential) and inerrancy as "without error" (actual). Given these definitions it is ludicrous to speak of something which is infallible (not capable of erring) as having erred (errancy). "To assert that something is infallible and

¹⁰ James T. Draper and Kenneth Keathley, *Biblical Authority*, 109-110.

¹¹ Draper, 108.

¹² James Leo Garret, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, 177.

¹³ Harold Lindsell, *God's Incomparable Word*, 19.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed., 246.

¹⁶ R. C. Sproul, *Explaining Inerrancy*, 34.

yet at the same time errant is either to distort the meaning of infallible and/or errant, or else to be in a state of confusion.”¹⁷ While the Bible’s primary aim is not scientific or historical (primary purpose being to reveal God, His character, His plan, etc), such assertions are fully true when they are made. This belief ultimately comes down to understanding who God is. God is omniscient and omnipotent, and in giving scripture He was completely truthful in His declaration, ensuring it would not mislead His children. If the Bible is false in one area, it is uncertain in all places. Charles Ryrie gives the following syllogism: Major Premise 1: God is true (Rom 3:4), Major Premise 2: God breathed out Scripture (II Tim 3:16), Conclusion: Therefore, Scriptures are true (John 17:17). Of interesting note is that the conclusion is not only logical but also scriptural.

- g. Robert Strimple explains rightly, “Our recognition of the unique authority of Scripture rests on the recognition that it is not simply the first or the best interpretation; it is God’s. It is the word of God, not simply because it points us to Christ who is the living Word of God, which it does, but as the Westminster Confession says, because God is its author and is so in such a way, according to II Timothy 3:16, that it is the out-breathed word of God, which speaks not with relative authority but with absolute authority.”¹⁸
- h. The Bible clearly speaks of the process of inspiration.
 - (1) II Peter 1:20-21 states, “But know this first of all that no prophecy is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” Martyn Lloyd Jones comments, “No prophecy of Scripture gives any individual’s private understanding or interpretation of things... ‘carried along, borne along, driven along’ ... The whole time [the writer] was controlled by this gale of the Spirit, by this word of God, this divine energy.”¹⁹
 - (2) II Timothy 3:16-17 states, “All Scripture is inspired by God (*God-breathed*) 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.” Not only is inspiration explained in these verses but also sufficiency. Paul reminds Timothy of the Scriptures’ source – the Lord, and on that basis reminds him that they contain everything necessary to equip the saint for every good work. This verse should be seen in light of Ephesians 2:10 which explains that the child of God is “His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” God, in saving a people for Himself, did so with a plan in mind for that people to complete – good works. Paul explains to Timothy “that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”
 - (3) James and Peter state this truth similarly:
 - **James 1:18-21** In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures. ¹⁹ *This* you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak *and* slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. ²¹ Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.
 - **1 Peter 1:22-25** Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, ²³ for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴ For, "ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE

¹⁷ Ibid, 35.

¹⁸ Robert B. Strimple, “The Relationship Between Scripture and Tradition in Contemporary Roman Catholic Theology.” *Westminster Theological Journal*, 34.

¹⁹ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God the Father, God the Son*, 28-29.

FLOWER FALLS OFF,²⁵ BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER." And this is the word which was preached to you.

- (4) So the scriptures (by the power of the Holy Spirit) are God's sufficient gift for providing wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Jesus, but they are also His designed means for equipping his people to be ready for good works. II Timothy 3:17 uses a form of readiness twice to over-abundantly describe Scripture's Sufficiency – *ajvrtioç* (man perfectly adapted for his task, fit shape/condition, proficient) and *ejxhrtismenoc* (fully equipped, in the perfect tense – completed action with continuing results). Psalm 119:1 exhorts, "Blessed are those *whose way is blameless* who walk in the law of the Lord!" Hebrew poetry often makes use of "thought-rhyming" to highlight, stress, and build upon an idea. Here "being blameless" is equated with "walking in the law of the Lord." If our steps are ordered by God's Word, we can have assurance that we are pleasing Him!
- (5) It is also important to investigate Jesus' comments about the Scriptures. In John 10:35 Jesus exclaimed that "Scripture cannot be broken." In Matthew 5:18, Jesus explained, "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished." This statement is especially enlightening when considered alongside the Temple which Jesus pointed to as transient (Matt 24:2). The Scriptures and the Temple were the two objects of Jesus' day considered sacred, Jesus holds up the Scriptures alone.
- i. William Countryman supplies a good illustration of the downward spiral which will occur from a misunderstanding of inspiration. An errant perspective toward the Bible and its authority is sure to follow. After defining inspiration as merely meaning "inspiring," but certainly not supernatural words from God, he says: "We may well suppose that for the Bible to be true and authoritative, it must utter the last word on every possible topic. It comes as a shock to us, then, to realize that the Bible contains errors of science and history and also, what is worse, contradictions in matters of belief and morality."²⁰
 - j. Meanwhile, Basil Manly Jr. rightly explains the reason for Countryman's low view of Scripture. "If the only inspiration which the Bible has is that which is common to all Christians, or even to all men of genius, whether godly or not, or even to all men, as some say, it cannot furnish us with any infallible or authoritative guidance."²¹ Given Countryman's misunderstanding of inspiration, his faulty beliefs on inerrancy and sufficiency follow.
 - k. Scripture's uniqueness is seen in its being directly from God. It 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" (Hebrews 4:12). Psalm 19 is especially poignant in describing the importance of written revelation. In verses 1-6 the characteristics of general revelation are described, while verses 7-14 highlight the surpassing value of special revelation. The descriptions of Scripture can be broken into title, characteristic, benefit (i.e. Law of the Lord, perfect, restoring the soul; Testimony of the Lord, sure, making wise the simple; etc.). John MacArthur explains, "The point of the psalm is the superiority—the utter spiritual perfection and all-sufficiency—of special revelation, the written Word of God."²²
3. The Authority of Scripture
- a. A discussion of authority is now vitally important. A 1979 Gallup poll asked "When testing religious beliefs which authority do you turn to first?" There were four possible answers: what the Church says, what religious leaders say, what the Holy Spirit says to me personally, and what the Bible says. Of all respondents 27% answered "what the Holy Spirit says to me personally" while 40% responded "what the Bible says," but of respondents ages 18-29, 36%

²⁰ William Countryman, *Biblical Authority or Biblical Tyranny*, 109.

²¹ Basil Manly Jr., *The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration*, 61.

²² MacArthur, *Think Biblically*, 29.

- answered “what the Holy Spirit says to me personally” while only 31% answered “what the Bible says.” A shift away from the authority of the Word of God is occurring.
- b. Garrett summarizes the main views of spiritual authority as follows.
 - (1) First, there are people who affirm the Church and Tradition as their source of authority. The Eastern Orthodox Church holds to the special and unique authority of 7 early ecumenical councils. The Roman Catholic Church embraces all 21 ecumenical councils, the last being Vatican II (1962-65) and the authority of the Pope (the vicar of Christ). In this system, the Bible is subservient to the Church as it relates to interpretation. Only the Ecclesiastical leaders, ultimately the Pope, have the authority to interpret Scripture, and that interpretation must be accepted by all in the Church as infallible.
 - (2) Second, there is the Classical Protestant position that affirms Scripture as the supreme authority, resting above creeds, confessions, councils, or private religious experiences.
 - (3) Third, there is the divine-human encounter model which exists in various movements: Catholic mystics, Quakers, Liberal Protestants, Existentialists, etc. Authority is seen as immediate transference of divine truth with each person having a self-authenticating proof of authority. The individual’s impressions judge both scripture and tradition.²³
 - c. Protestants have traditionally held the second view. Scripture is the authority that Christians should look to. Garrett goes on to explain the debate revolving around the proper understanding of the reformation doctrine of “Sola Scriptura” (Scripture alone). The discussion involves whether to interpret this doctrine as Scripture being the *only* channel of religious authority (the only word on a subject) or as the *supreme* channel of religious authority (the final word on a subject).
 - d. In speaking about Martin Luther, the 16th century Reformer, R.C. Sproul explains: “For Luther the sola of Sola Scriptura was inseparably related to the Scriptures unique inerrancy... The Reformers did not mean by Sola Scriptura that the Bible is the only authority in the church. Rather they meant that the Bible is the only infallible authority in the church.”²⁴
 - e. It is important at this juncture to make a distinction between revelation and authority. There are two primary thrusts of Sola Scriptura: (1) Scripture’s uniqueness as normative authority and (2) Scripture’s uniqueness as the source of special revelation.²⁵
 - (1) God is the supreme authority and thus His Word supremely rules over our lives, but the Bible also speaks of honoring elders/overseers/pastors as under-shepherds of the flock of God (I Timothy 5:17-18). Governments, too, are to be honored for they receive their authority from the Lord (Romans 13). In this sense the Bible is the supreme authority over Christians. In this definition, the uniqueness of Scripture is seen as the only source of revelation, and supreme normative authority.
 - (2) Erickson explains, “By the authority of the Bible we mean that the Bible, as the expression of God’s will to us, possesses the right supremely to define what we are to believe and how we are to conduct ourselves.”²⁶
 - (3) Sproul states, “We affirm that the Scriptures are the supreme written norm by which God binds the conscience, and that the authority of the church is subordinate to that of Scripture.”²⁷
 - (4) Only God has the right to bind the consciences of men. While confessions and creeds can be useful, they are not infallible. A study of Christian history and tradition can be helpful in some matters, but it can never be used in such a way that the authority of Scripture is undermined.

²³ Garrett, 178-179.

²⁴ R. C. Sproul, “Sola Scriptura: Crucial to Evangelicalism.” *Foundation of Biblical Authority*, 104.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 109.

²⁶ Erickson, 267.

²⁷ Sproul, *Explaining Inerrancy*, 12

- (5) Charles Hodge explains, “All that Protestants insist upon is, that the Bible contains all the extant revelations of God, which He designed to be the rule of faith and practice for his Church; so that nothing can rightfully be imposed on the consciences of men as truth or duty which is not taught directly or by necessary implication in the Holy Scriptures... The people of God are bound by nothing but the Word of God...If we would hold fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, we must adhere to the principle that in matters of religion and morals the Scriptures alone have authority to bind the conscience.”²⁸ It is for this reason that Scripture’s uniqueness must be upheld and its corresponding authority, all leading to its complete sufficiency.

D. Discussing Sufficiency

1. The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit
 - a. With a lack of Biblical discernment, the church is in a precarious position. With the onset of a largely Biblically illiterate church, many people can fall victim to “mystical leaders.” This is always a danger when people allow for other sources of revelation to vie for authority in spiritual matters.
 - b. Paul warned the Colossians, Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God (Colossians 2:18-19).
 - c. MacArthur in his book, *Sufficiency in Christ*, pinpoints the issue, “[Modern Mysticism] has taken hold rapidly because it promises what so many people are seeking: something more, something better, something richer, something easier—something fast and easy to substitute for a life of careful, disciplined obedience to the Word of Christ.”²⁹
 - d. With a proper understanding of scripture comes a steadfast confidence that a Christian has what is needed to live a life that honors the Lord.
 - e. John Piper quotes Martin Luther as having said, “It is a sin and a shame not to know our own book or to understand the speech and words of our God.”³⁰ Sound preaching on the area of Sufficiency will bring to light the lackadaisical attitude that so many have posited toward the Scriptures. This sin needs to be exposed for what it is: not valuing what God has provided. The Bible must be held in high esteem, understanding that it contains what is needed for people to live a life that glorifies God. MacArthur exclaims, “Tragically, some of the most biblically illiterate believers in our day live in lands where God’s Word is readily available and where scriptural preaching, teaching, and literature are abundant.”³¹
 - f. The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy states: “We affirm that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the Scriptures, assuring believers of the truthfulness of God’s written Word. We deny that this witness of the Holy Spirit operates in isolation from or against Scripture.”³²
 - (1) There is reciprocity involved; the Word bears witness to the Spirit, while the Spirit bears witness to the Word. By the illuminating of the Spirit (the giving of understanding) the Scriptures (which are inspired by Him) are perspicuous, meaning “all things necessary to salvation are sufficiently plain to be understood even by the unlearned.”³³ We can be sure that the Scriptures are the means by which the Holy Spirit leads and guides the people of God. In a day where people upholding the Sufficiency of Scripture are criticized for

²⁸ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, 183.

²⁹ John MacArthur Jr., *Sufficiency in Christ*, 182.

³⁰ John Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 99.

³¹ John MacArthur Jr., *MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, 2 *Timothy*, 155.

³² Sproul, *Explaining Inerrancy*, 52-53

³³ Hodge, 184.

“quenching the Spirit” the following statement by R. Fowler White clears this tragic misunderstanding.

- (2) In the Bible the church hears God’s true voice, in the Scriptures, we know that He is speaking His very words to us. Advocates of words “freshly spoken from heaven” should beware. By diverting attention from the Scriptures, they quench the Spirit who is speaking therein.³⁴
 - (3) The Holy Spirit is a person to be known and related to, not an emotional high to be felt. So many people today seek an emotionally charged experience instead of a genuine relationship to the Person of the Holy Spirit. It is the Bible that ensures that our understanding of the Holy Spirit’s person and role is correct. John Piper beautifully describes, “Without the ‘external Word’ we would not know one spirit from the other, and the objective personality of the Holy Spirit Himself would be lost in a blur of subjective expressions.”³⁵
 - (4) Millard Erickson further explains: “The written word, correctly interpreted, is the objective basis of authority. The inward illuminating and persuading work of the Holy Spirit is the subjective dimension. This dual dimension prevents sterile, cold, dry truth on the one hand, and overexcitability and ill-advised fervor on the other.”³⁶
- g. Illumination is a vital key to a Christian’s ability to make decisions in line with the Word of God, and thus honor the Lord. Without the Holy Spirit’s illuminating of Scripture, the truth of God’s Word would not be able to be accepted. I Corinthians 2:12-14 explains that the natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit for they appear as foolishness to him, but for those who are children of God, the Spirit teaches them spiritual things with spiritual words. The process of being taught by the Spirit occurs over time where the Christian’s mind is transformed. Godly desires and patterns of thinking replace old sinful ones.
 - h. Ferguson notes: “The revelation of Scripture becomes, in a well-taught, Spirit-illuminated believer, so much a part of his or her mindset that the will of God frequently seems to become instinctively and even immediately clear... It is this kind of spiritual exercise that creates discernment.”³⁷
 - i. Hebrews 5:11-14 speaks of growing in the knowledge of the Word of God and thereby mature, having a mind transformed with senses trained to discern what God desires. The systematic reading, interpreting, and applying of God’s Word is the means by which the Holy Spirit equips believers to live as they ought to, doing the will of God. Jesus explains in the Gospel of John that the Holy Spirit teaches (14:26), witnesses to Jesus (15:26-27), convicts (16:8), and guides to all truth, glorifying Jesus (16:13-14).
2. Applying the Sufficiency of Scripture to Decision Making
- a. John MacArthur rightly explains the horrible trend today, “Pastors who are Bible teachers who carefully and thoroughly feed their people an unbroken pattern of accurate, deep, clear, and convicting understanding of God’s word are more and more rare as time passes.”³⁸
 - (1) With the loss of conviction that the Bible is sufficient, many consequences arise. The position of the Word of God in the church has been relegated to a lesser place, being replaced with other methods of knowing and doing the will of God. Difficult problems are reckoned to be beyond the scope of the Bible’s teaching. Yeager explains, “Those who are frustrated by problems they cannot solve are frustrated, not because the answer to their problem is not in the Word of God, but because they haven’t studied it enough.”³⁹

³⁴ R. Fowler White, “Does God Speak Today Apart from the Bible?” *The Coming Evangelical Crisis*, 87.

³⁵ Piper, 79.

³⁶ Erickson, 278.

³⁷ Ferguson, 55.

³⁸ MacArthur, *Think Biblically*, 23.

³⁹ Randolph O. Yeager, *The Renaissance New Testament*, 561.

- (2) It is time for Christians to stop blaming their lack of direction on the Bible and posit this rightly on their own lack of discipline as it relates to performing quality in-depth bible study. God’s Word is sufficient to equip the Christian for “every good work” (as already noted in II Timothy 3:17). The problem revolves around people not really being devoted to Scripture. “They haven’t committed themselves to the daily reading and application of the Word of God. Thus they lack genuine discernment and biblical understanding.”⁴⁰ Without a thorough regime of Bible study, the people of God lack the proper nourishment leading to wisdom, discernment, and godliness. The Bible is clear that the mind needs to be continually renewed by the Spirit of God through the Word of God. Romans 12:2 explains, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”
- b. When seeking God’s will, we must be very aware of our motives, and seek what God has promised to give us. We must remember God’s ultimate purpose of Glorifying Himself, and that being applying personally through our being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Rom 8:28-30).
- (1) Charles Swindoll states, “Our tendency is to focus solely on our calling—on where we should go, how we should get there, and what exactly we should do about it. God’s concern is the process that He is taking us through to mature us and ready us, making us more like His Son.”⁴¹ Swindoll further explains that he has two enduring goals in his life: to learn how to think biblically and encourage others to do the same.⁴²
- (2) When speaking of specific instructions for an individual’s life, the Bible’s ability to speak to personal situations is often doubted. There is widespread confusion regarding how to figure out God’s will in a particular decision. A thorough investigation of the Scriptures on a continual basis gives Christians all they need to handle any situation that occurs in their lives.
- (3) Understanding the doctrine of the Sufficiency of Scripture frees the individual from worrying about whether or not he or she interpreted all of the possible circumstances rightly, or followed the right “impression/urging/nudging,” or listened to the right counsel. It also frees an individual from misunderstanding whether an adverse circumstance should be interpreted as a “closed door” that should be a sign to move on or just the appearance of a “closed door” in which case the person should persevere in the same direction. Anxiety can fill a person’s mind leading to all sorts of frustration and confusion (for example, the worry that someone will marry the “wrong” person and then live the rest of his or her life outside the will of God, having missed “the one”).
- c. To answer this dilemma more thoroughly, the will of God needs to be investigated. The Bible describes two “wills” of God.
- (1) The first is that which is revealed to us, Holy Scripture. God has chosen to give us understanding into many of His ways and purposes, and we are accountable to Him to know those truths and apply them. This can be called God’s Revealed or Moral Will.
- (2) At the same time, it is clear that nothing happens outside of God’s Will for He works all things according to His purpose (Rom 8:28-30, Eph 1:11). This can be referred to His Secret or Sovereign Will.
- (3) There is a third “will of God” that is often referred to as “God’s will for your life” and it is seen as something that needs to be discovered through not only scripture but interpretation of circumstances and godly advice and prayer.

⁴⁰ MacArthur, *Think Biblically*, 34.

⁴¹ Charles Swindoll, *The Mystery of God’s Will*, ix.

⁴² *Ibid*, 202.

- While it is true that God has a design for each person’s life, it does not follow that He desires us to seek those specifics through means that He has not ordained for us to know them by.
 - This mimics the pagan practice of divination/soothsaying, desiring to know the future outside of what God has given us to live by, His Word, and is expressly forbidden by the bible.
 - Deuteronomy 29:29 states, “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.”
 - The things revealed to us in God’s Word are for us, and we should spend our lives knowing what God has told us, but the things not revealed are the Lord’s and we must not seek to know what God has expressly not revealed to us. The doctrine of Scripture’s Sufficiency has never meant that everything to be known has been given, just that what has been given is enough to know and please God.
- d. So a Christian’s responsibility is to be like the Bereans in Acts 17:11 “examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.” This is where the blessedness of an understanding of the Sufficiency of Scripture comes to the foreground.
- (1) Grudem posits, “The truth of the sufficiency of scripture is of great significance for our Christian lives, for it enables us to focus our search for God’s words to us on the Bible alone and saves us from the endless task of searching through all the writings of Christians throughout history, or through all the teaching of the church, or through all the subjective feelings and impressions that come to our minds from day to day, in order to find what God requires of us.”⁴³
 - (2) It’s not that the writings of others in Church history have no value (as getting wisdom from others whether ancient or contemporary is profitable), but that God’s Word is always the definitive answer. We “need” go no further!
 - (3) This still brings us to the question of the practical outworking of the principle of the sufficiency of Scripture as it relates to making a decision. When deciding who to marry or what college to attend or where to work, what process should an individual follow?
- e. James Boice states this so well: After having prayed for God’s providential guidance, we are free to do whatever seems right to us, knowing that God who cares for us always will certainly keep us in His way. In areas about which the Bible does not speak explicitly, we are free to act as we think best, as long as we are obeying God and trying to live a godly life. That does not mean God does not have a plan for our lives in all areas. He does. He has a detailed plan for all things, having pre-ordained “whatsoever comes to pass,” as the Westminster Confession of Faith says. But that does not mean that we have to know God’s plan in advance. In fact, we cannot. But what we can know and need to know is what God has told us in the Bible.⁴⁴
- f. It is interesting to note that to some level everyone operates like this. For example, the decision as to whether to brush one’s teeth before or after taking a shower has to be decided upon. Usually someone will appeal to the difference between large and small decisions, but if one is seeking a comprehensive approach to decision making a determination on distinguishing between large and small decisions must be completed. Usually that distinction just means that the larger decision involves several smaller ones and contains further reaching consequences. For this reason, if circumstances must be analyzed in every decision, this study could be endless in making any decisions.
- g. For an extremely well-thought out development of Boice’s opinion (decision making based solely on the Sufficiency of Scripture) see Garry Friesen’s work, Decision Making and the Will of God. He outlines four principles to decision making:

⁴³ Grudem, 128.

⁴⁴ Boice, 82.

- (1) In those areas specifically addressed by the Bible, the revealed commands of God (His moral will) are to be obeyed.
 - (2) In those areas where the bible gives no command or principle (nonmoral decisions), the believer is free and responsible to choose his own course of action. Any decision made within the moral will of God is acceptable to God.
 - (3) In non-moral decisions, the objective of the Christian is to make wise decisions on the basis of spiritual expediency.
 - (4) In all decisions, the believer should humbly submit, in advance, to the outworking of God's sovereign will as it touches each decision.⁴⁵
- h. What God has revealed in His Word is His perfect and complete guide for every Christian's life. God's Revealed/Moral Will makes prescriptions not only for the believer's actions but also for his attitudes and goals. The doctrine of the Sufficiency of Scripture, when rightly understood, provides the Christian with the assurance that he can make decisions free from the anxiety of double-guessing his gut-feelings or whether he listened to the right advice. It also calls believers to study the Scriptures, and to truly treasure them for what they are: God's very Words to man.
 - i. By doing this Paul's prayer for the Colossians would be fulfilled: "For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col 1:9-10).
 - j. A proper conviction of the Sufficiency of Scripture also serves to safeguard believers from submitting to improper authorities. Grudem explains, "God does not require us to believe anything about Himself or His redemptive work that is not found in Scripture... It should also be noted that whenever challenges to the sufficiency of Scripture have come in the form of other documents to be placed alongside Scripture (whether from extrabiblical Christian literature of the first century or from the accumulated teachings of the Roman Catholic Church or from the books of various cults such as the Book of Mormon), the result has always been (1) to deemphasize the teachings of the bible itself and (2) to begin to teach some things that are contrary to Scripture."⁴⁶ So any and all instructions that go beyond Scripture can be disregarded, and we ought always be aware of distortions that any group might try to introduce to Scripture.
 - k. What a blessing it is to know, as Grudem states that (1) "nothing is sin that is not forbidden by Scripture either explicitly or by implication" and (2) "nothing is required of us by God that is not commanded in Scripture either explicitly or by implication."⁴⁷ We ought to resist attempting to place artificial constraints on people, instead of allowing people freedom that God grants. Grudem puts it so well: "The Holy Spirit will not empower obedience to rules that do not have God's approval from Scripture, nor will believers generally find delight in obedience to commands that do not accord with the laws of God written on their hearts."⁴⁸ The other thing to keep in mind is a matter of focus. Because many today despair of every "figuring out" God's "hidden will" oftentimes they spend little effort striving to do God's will (for who can know it?). This is where the doctrine of the Sufficiency of Scripture becomes so important practically! God's will has been revealed in Scripture and there is great hope to know and live in accordance with it! Instead of spending countless hours in analyzing circumstances, impressions, and advice from others, we ought to spend real quality time in God's Word – growing in submission to God through obedience to what He commands! And

⁴⁵ Garry Friesen, Decision Making and the Will of God, 151-152.

⁴⁶ Grudem, 132.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 132-133.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 133.

in those matters which God's Word leaves upon, enjoy the freedom God has granted and make use of the wisdom He provides.

- l. What great freedom there is in the Sufficiency of Scripture! Psalm 119:44 "So I will keep Your law continually, Forever and ever. ⁴⁵ And I will walk at liberty, For I seek Your precepts... v165 Those who love Your law have great peace, And nothing causes them to stumble."
- m. *For further study on this subject, see the notes on "**Decision Making and the Will of God.**"*