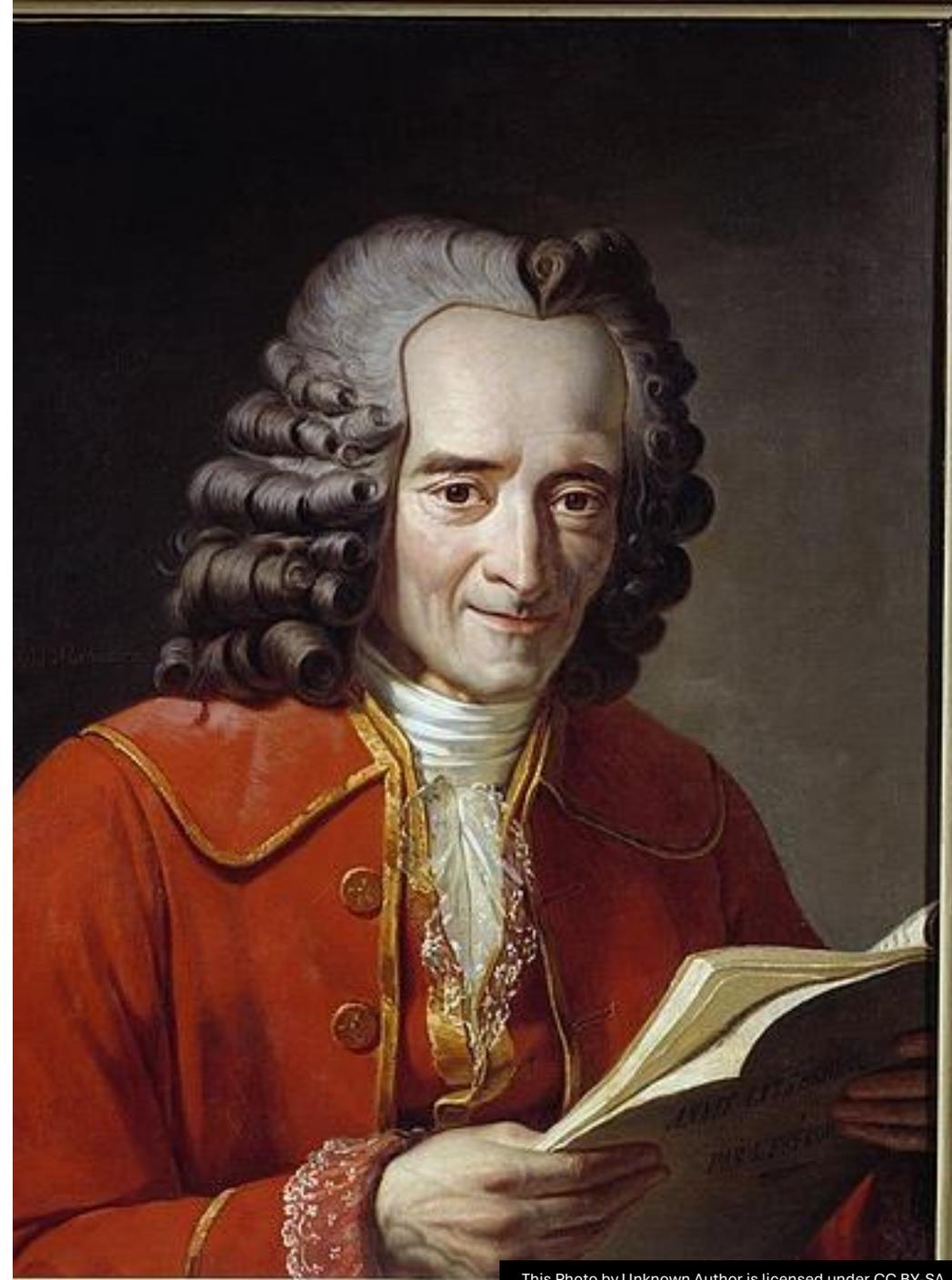


# God's Sovereign Word

1 Thessalonians 2:13

# Voltaire, French Philosopher (1694-1778)

- “The Bible. That is what fools have written, what imbeciles commend, what rogues teach and young children are made to learn by heart.”
- “We are living in the twilight of Christianity.”
- “Christianity is the most ridiculous, the most absurd, and bloody religion that has ever infected the world...My one regret in dying is that I cannot aid you in this noble enterprise of extirpating the world of this infamous superstition.”



# What's the point?

- Believers must understand the nature of God's word in at least three areas:
  1. The *simplicity* of God's word
  2. The *sufficiency* of God's word
  3. The *supremacy* of God's word

# The Simplicity of God's Word

- “Clarity” or “Perspicuity”
- Definition- 1689 LBC
  - *“All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, 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.”*
- 1 Thessalonians 2:13: “when you received...you accepted”

# Objections

- Catholic Church
  - The bible must be understood along-side tradition
  - 2 Peter 3:16
- Pluralism
  - There are so many different interpretations and denominations in the Church
  - How can God's word be clear if so many misunderstandings take place?

# Response

- Old Testament
  - Children can understand them (Deut. 6:6-7)
  - God himself declares that it is “not too hard” (Deut. 30:11-14)
  - Even “outcasts” “understood the reading” (Nehemiah 1:9, 8:8)
- New Testament
  - “All nations” Matthew 28:19-20
  - “His commandments are not burdensome.” (1 John 5:3)
- God is the giver of language and knows best how to use it (Genesis 1:3, 1:28)



# Herman Bavinck

*“On balance, however, the disadvantages do not outweigh the advantages. For the denial of the clarity of Scripture carries with it the subjection of the layperson to the priest, or a person’s conscience to the church. The freedom of religion and the human conscience, of the church and theology, stands and falls with the perspicuity of Scripture. It alone is able to maintain the freedom of the Christian; it is the origin and guarantee of religious liberty as well as of our political freedoms. Even if a freedom that cannot be obtained and enjoyed aside from the dangers of licentiousness and caprice is still always so to be preferred over a tyranny that suppresses liberty.”*

# So what?

1. We must trust the Holy Spirit to help us understand God's word.
2. We must surround ourselves with Godly people to help correct misunderstandings.
3. We must resist the temptation to view God as a hidden puzzle to solve.

# The Sufficiency of God's Word

- **The argument: Hypothetical Syllogism**
  1. If God is sovereign, then his choices are always sufficient.
  2. God is sovereign. (Job 42:2, Isa.45:7-9, Col. 1:16-17)
  3. God has chosen to reveal himself and his salvation of his people through Jesus Christ and his word. (Heb. 1:1-2)
  4. Therefore, God's word is sufficient to reveal all that God intends. (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

# The Sufficiency of God's Word

- Most Christians have struggled to view the bible as sufficient.
  1. Wishing for God to speak privately and directly to us
  2. Wishing the bible contained more about a topic or issue.
  3. Wishing for certain doctrines to be more palatable.
  4. Seeking for more colorful details in biblical stories

# High Stakes

- God is jealous for the worship of his people (Ex. 34:14, Deut. 4:24, Eph. 5:25-27)
- **How we view Christ matters more than anything else we believe**
  - “who do the people say that I am?” (Matthew, Mark, Luke)
  - John 20:31
  - Our eternal destiny depends on it
  - If Christ cares so much about how he is understood, so should we.

# So what?

1. We must trust the Spirit to help you believe his word is enough.
2. We must resist the temptation to seek to know God and his will apart from his word.
3. We must be extremely cautious about other methods of revealing who Christ is.

# The Supremacy of God's Word

- Definition
  - The word of God is the *final* word on any matter it addresses, and it is true because God tells the truth not because someone or something agrees with it.
- The way we view the scriptures reveals the way we view God

# The Thessalonians

- Acts 17:1-15
- Thessalonian Jews rejected God's word not on the basis of its truthfulness but because it turned their world "upside down" (v.6)
- Rejection of God's word always results in immoral and inconsistent standards

# The Foundation of Supremacy

- By what standard?
- Apologetics/Evangelism
  - The authority of the scriptures do not depend on:
    - Archaeology
    - Science
    - Authority of men
  - It is supreme because God is sovereign
  - A lack of evidence is not the barrier for the unbeliever (Romans 1:18-21)

# So What?

1. We must be aware of the temptation to replace God's word with our own preferences as the standard for truth.
2. We must read God's word as though we were sitting in front of God's throne listening to him speak.
3. We must be steadfast in our refusal to set aside God's word when discussing hard or uncomfortable moral issues with others.

Why did God reveal himself?