

- New Testament:
  - Acts 12:24 “the word of God increased and multiplied” (6:7, 19:20)
  - Acts 20:32, 1 Thess. 2:13, Col. 1:5-6 – sanctifying power of Word
  - 1 Pet. 1:23-25 “word of God” is the “good news that was preached”
  - (2 Tim. 3:15-17); and Hebrews 4:12 (w/ Eph. 6:17, 2 Cor. 10:4)

### C. Connection with God’s Character

- Scripture’s efficacy flows from the power of the God whose word it is.
  - Exod. 8:10 “no one like our God” (Ps. 86:8; Jer. 10:6)
  - God’s power is displayed in both his wrath and judgment and his mercy and salvation.
  - Nothing is too hard for Him – Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:27, 27; Luke 1:37
- Scripture’s power is activated by the Holy Spirit and his illuminating work. The Spirit gave the Word and works to apply it to our hearts.

### III. A Christian Reading of Scripture (How to approach Scripture)

- We want to have the same attitude Jesus had toward Scripture. We will “sit under” Scripture and let it shape and redirect our thinking.
- We will study Scripture with humility, prayerfully dependent on the Spirit – Isa. 66:2.

“The Bible is not a burden, not a rule book that binds us, not a dark, unfriendly word that always and only leaves us broken. It is a source of deep, rich, full-throated joy.” ~ TDOS, p. 184

- Ps. 119:18 “Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.”

### A Look Ahead at Next Week

- We will begin a closer look at the historical processes by which the Bible was faithfully copied and translated down through time.

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**Goal:** Grow in our understanding of the doctrine of Scripture, be equipped to answer objections, and to better learn how to read and understand the Bible.

**Sources:** Quotes indicated “TDOS” are from Mark Thompson, *The Doctrine of Scripture: An Introduction* (Crossway, 2022). Lesson 8 draws heavily from TDOS, chapter 5-6.

## Scripture: Theology, Text & Transmission

### Class 8: Scripture’s Character: Sufficient & Effective

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#### Review

In our study we have settled “**what** Scripture is” (the written record of the speech of the living God), and are now moving on to discuss “**how** Scripture is.” We have looked at the clarity or understandability of Scripture – we don’t need authoritative interpreters (Roman Catholic Church tradition) to understand it. Last week we looked at the truthfulness (or inerrancy) of Scripture – since we hold that “what Scripture says, God says” and since God “is not a man that he should lie,” we conclude that Scripture is wholly truthful in all that asserts. We agree with Paul Feinberg’s assertion:

“Inerrancy means that when all facts are known, the Scriptures in their original autographs and properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in everything that they affirm.” ~ TDOS, p. 152

Today we will cover the sufficiency and effectivity of Scripture which can be understood as answers to two questions: *Is Scripture enough? And Does Scripture make a difference?* We will also end with a Christian approach to reading Scripture.

#### I. The Sufficiency of Scripture (Scripture is *enough*)

##### A. Affirmations of Scripture’s Sufficiency

- Jesus’ appeal to Scripture in Matt. 4:4, 7, 10; Scripture being all that the Rich Man’s brothers would need (Luke 16:29-31); “Have you not read?” (Matt. 12:3, 5; 19:4; 22:31); Jesus’ view of Jewish tradition vs. Scripture (Matt. 15:1-20, esp. vv. 3, 8-9).
- Paul in 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Peter in 2 Pet. 1:3-4.
- Yet Jesus was aware of the need for his words & their importance (Matt. 7:24-27; Jn. 12:47; 14:24) – and the future writings of his Apostles (Jn. 14:26; 15:20; 17:20); the Apostles also knew of other scriptures they were writing (2 Pet. 3:16; 2 Thess. 2:15; Gal. 1:1)
- OT affirmations: Moses in Deut. 4:2; 12:29-32; 29:29. (Also see Prov. 30:6.), but we know more Scripture was written after Deuteronomy (and after Proverbs).

“The commands that God had given them, the law Moses had inscribed for them, was to guide their response to God and his salvation. They did not need to look elsewhere, and in fact it would have been dangerous to look elsewhere. What the LORD had given them was enough.” ~ TDOS, p. 160

## B. Definition

Wayne Grudem: “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 everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.” ~ quoted in TDOS, p. 161-162

## C. Connection with God’s Character

- Scripture’s sufficiency flows from God’s capacity and benevolence.

“Why would our heavenly Father provide his children with a gift that was insufficient? Why would he wish only part of what was needful to be written and leave the rest to ‘the uncertain tradition of men’?” ~ TDOS, 162

- Scripture is sufficient for what God has designed it. It is sufficient:

“to teach, to promise and warn, to command or invite, and to elicit faith and nourish it in those brought to new life in the Spirit.” ~ TDOS, 162

## D. Two Aspects of Sufficiency

- Material aspect: its completeness or perfection – *it contains everything a person needs to know to be saved and live a life pleasing to God.*
- Formal aspect: its self-authority – *Scripture is its own interpreter.* (Similar to Scripture’s clarity.)
  - Historically expressed as *Sola Scriptura*.
  - This does not mean no preaching or teaching is needed (that would be *nuda Scriptura*; we can’t just have us and our Bible and need nothing else.)
  - It means the Bible is the final authority over any other authority for understanding its message. All other theological writing is to be tested by Scripture.

## E. A Place for Systematic Theology?

- *Is doing theology not an example of “going beyond what is written”?*

- Sometimes theology does go too far. (Example: liberation theology, feminist theology, defenses of homosexuality)
- Theology done right however, is an extension of what Scripture teaches, and systematic theology organizes doctrine by topics.

Westminster Confession of Faith 1:6 – “The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.” ~ TDOS, 166

- Jesus did theology this way (example: Mark 12:26-27 based on Ex. 3:6).
- The doctrine of the Trinity is an example of “necessary consequence.” The words “trinity (*trinitas*)” or “of one being (*homoousios*)” are not in Scripture but were coined to explain how various Scripture texts cohere.

## II. The Efficacy of Scripture (Scripture makes a *difference*)

### A. Definition

“Efficacy is capacity for producing a desired result or effect; effectiveness.” ~ Dictionary.com

“The efficacy of Scripture [is] its power to achieve its purpose” ~ TDOS 169

### B. Affirmations of Scripture’s Efficacy

- Jesus:
  - His word was powerful enough to calm the storm & raise the dead
  - John 6:68 – Jesus had the “words of eternal life”
  - Mark 12:24 – Jesus connects Scripture and the power of God.
  - Jesus was sure the Word had to be fulfilled – in his ministry; and judgment would come on those who rejected the Word’s testimony – Jn. 5:39-40, 45-47.
- Old Testament:
  - The world was created by God’s words.
  - Deut. 18:22; Ezek. 24:14; Isa. 55:10-11
  - Psalm 19:7-8 (cf. 119) – word “revives the soul, makes wise the simple, rejoices the heart, enlightens the eyes”
  - Yet the effective Word can be one of judgment (Jer. 1:9-10)