

THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

*Precious Bible! What a treasure
Does the Word of God afford!
All I want for life or pleasure,
Food and med' cine, shield and sword:
Let the world account me poor,
Having this I need no more.*

John Newton

Group Work: What are the theological implications of these verses in regard to the doctrine of Scripture? (2 Tim 3:16-17; Heb 4:12-13; Jer 15:16; Ps 19:7-11; Ps 119:33-40; Luke 24:13-35; Prov 30:5-6; 2 Tim 2:14-15)

THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE

The canon of Scripture is the collection of books that the church has recognized as having divine authority in matters of faith and doctrine. The term comes from the Greek word 'kanon' and the Hebrew word 'qaneh', both of which mean 'a rule', or 'measuring rod.'

What is the canon of Scripture?

- The list of all the books that *belong* in the Bible

*If we are to trust and obey God absolutely we must have a collection of words that we are certain are God's own words to us. If there are any sections of Scripture about which we have doubts whether they are God's words or not, we will not consider them to have absolute divine authority and we will not trust them as much as we would trust God himself.*¹⁵ (Wayne Grudem)

OT Canon: Began with the 10 Commandments and was completed in 435 BC with Malachi.

NT Canon: For a book to belong in the canon, it is absolutely necessary that the book have *divine* authorship. If the words of the book are God's words (through human authors), and if the early church, under the direction of the apostles, preserved the book as part of Scripture, then the book belongs in the canon.

Apostolic Authorship: *Matthew; John; Romans to Philemon* (Pauline Epistles); *James; 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2, and 3 John; and Revelation*

Apostolic Ties: *Mark* (Peter); *Luke and Acts* (Paul); *Jude* (James and Jesus); *Hebrews* (early belief was that the book was Pauline but most today believe that is not)

¹⁵Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 54.

The Thirty-ninth Paschal Letter of Athanasius (A.D. 367) and the Council of Carthage (A.D. 397) agreed on our present-day canon.

A Note About Biblical Theology:

*We must recognize that central to Scripture is the unifying history of God's redeeming words and acts, of which the advent and work of Jesus Christ are the ultimate focus. Jesus Christ is the center to which everything in Scripture is united and bound together—the beginning and the end, creation and redemption, humanity, the world, the fall, history, and the future.*¹⁶ (David S. Dockery and David P. Nelson)

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

2 Timothy 3:16: “All Scripture is breathed out by God...”

*All the words in the Bible are God's words. Therefore, to disbelieve or disobey them is to disbelieve or disobey God himself.*¹⁷

The Inspiration of Scripture¹⁸

Inspiration: a divine act that creates an identity between a *divine* word and a *human* word.

- **Verbal Inspiration:** the words of Scripture, not only the ideas of the biblical writers, are God's Word
- **Plenary Inspiration:** everything in Scripture is God's Word

*...inspiration means that God used all the distinct personal qualities of each writer. God used the difference of heredity, environment, upbringing, education, gifts, talents, styles, interests, and idiosyncrasies to reveal his word. These differences were not a barrier that God had to overcome. Rather, they were God's chosen means of communicating with us. God's Word is complex and nuanced, multiperspectival. God used the organic complexity of human persons and the diversities among persons to communicate the complexity of his own personal word. He used human persons to communicate with us in a fully personal way.*¹⁹ (John Frame)

The Inerrancy of Scripture

Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact.²⁰

¹⁶David S. Dockery and David P. Nelson, “Special Revelation,” in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), 131.

¹⁷Wayne Grudem, *Christian Beliefs: Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know*. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2005), 13.

¹⁸John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*. (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Pub, 2010), 142-143.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 142.

²⁰Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 91.

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978)

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.
2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms: obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.
3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.

*Nothing is to be imposed as an article of Christian belief which is not taught by the plain and consentient testimony of Scripture; nothing is to be required as necessary to Christian conduct which is not so expressed or implied by that same plain and consentient testimony.*²¹ (F.F. Bruce)

How can a right understanding of the authority of Scripture strengthen our intimacy with God?

How can a right understanding of the authority of Scripture strengthen our missional activity?

²¹F.F. Bruce, "The Lausanne Covenant - 2: The Authority and Power of the Bible," *The Harvester* 55 (November 1976): 320-333.

THE CLARITY OF SCRIPTURE

“For who knows a person’s thoughts—except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.” (1 Corinthians 2:11-12)

What is meant by the clarity of Scripture?

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.²²

The doctrine of the clarity of Scripture says that Scripture is *able to be understood*, not that all understand it equally well.²³

There are two possible causes of why there would be doctrinal or ethical disagreement:²⁴

1. We are seeking to make affirmations where Scripture itself is silent
2. We have made mistakes in our interpretation of Scripture

Scripture affirms that it is able to be...²⁵

1. understood but not *all at once*. (Psalm 1:2)
2. understood but not without *effort*. (Ezra 7:10)
3. understood but not without *ordinary* means. (1 Cor 14:10–11, 16)
4. understood but not without the reader’s willingness to *obey* it. (Jas 1:22-25)
5. understood but not without the help of the *Holy Spirit*. (Psalm 119:34)
6. understood but not without human *misunderstanding*. (John 20:8-9)
7. understood but never *completely*. (Psalm 139:6)

How can a right understanding of the clarity of Scripture strengthen our intimacy with God?

How can a right understanding of the clarity of Scripture strengthen our missional activity?

²²Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 108.

²³Ibid., *Bible Doctrine*, 53.

²⁴Ibid., *Systematic Theology*, 109-110.

²⁵Ibid., “The Perspicuity of Scripture,” *Themelios* 34, no. 3 (November 2009): 294-301.

THE NECESSITY OF SCRIPTURE

What is meant by the necessity of Scripture?

*The Bible is necessary for knowledge of the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and certain knowledge of God's will, but is not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God's character and moral laws.*²⁶

1. Knowledge of the gospel

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17)

*One must either read the gospel message in the Bible for oneself or hear it from another person. Even those believers who came to salvation in the old covenant did so by trusting in the words of God that promised a Savior to come.*²⁷ (Wayne Grudem)

2. Maintaining spiritual life

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. (Matthew 4:4)

Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation... (1 Peter 2:2)

*...you must keep hearing the Bible's message to grow as a Christian. This means hearing it read and preached, reading it, studying it, memorizing it, meditating on it, and applying it. A Christian needs the Bible like a human needs food and water. The need never goes away.*²⁸ (Andy Naselli)

3. Knowledge of God's will

How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. (Psalm 119:9-11)

General Revelation vs. Special Revelation²⁹

General Revelation: The knowledge of God's existence, character, and moral law, which comes through creation to all humanity

Special Revelation: God's words addressed to specific people, such as the words of the Bible, the words of the OT prophets and the NT apostles, and the words of God spoken in personal address, such as at Mt Sinai and at Jesus' baptism

How can a right understanding of the necessity of Scripture strengthen our intimacy with God?

How can a right understanding of the necessity of Scripture strengthen our missional activity?

²⁶ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 116.

²⁷ Ibid., 118.

²⁸ Andy Naselli, "Scripture: How the Bible is a Book Like No Other," in *Don't Call It a Comeback: The Old Faith for a New Day*, ed. Kevin DeYoung (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 67.

²⁹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 122-123.

THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. (2 Peter 1:3-4)

What is meant by the sufficiency of Scripture?

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.³⁰

Practical Application:³¹

1. Search the Bible for answers
2. Do not add to Scripture (no other writings are equal to Scripture)
3. Do not count any other guidance/revelation as equal to Scripture
4. Do not add more sins or requirements to the ones named in Scripture
5. Be content with Scripture

How can a right understanding of the sufficiency of Scripture strengthen our intimacy with God?

How can a right understanding of the sufficiency of Scripture strengthen our missional activity?

Because the Bible stands over us, it requires reverence, submission, and obedience. Because it is completely truthful, it requires trust. Because its nature contrasts sharply with our finiteness and sinfulness, it requires humble reading that is always open to correction. And because it reveals God and his ways, it requires careful, prayerful reading that situates passages within its grand story of God's creation, our fall, Christ's redemption, and the universes consummation.³²

Andy Naselli

³⁰Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 127.

³¹Ibid., 131-135.

³²Andy Naselli, "Scripture: How the Bible is a Book Like No Other," 68.