

## The Doctrine of the Word (Part 2) The Clarity of the Bible

### SCAN - Four Important Attributes of Scripture

- the **Sufficiency** of Scripture
- the **Clarity** of Scripture
- the **Authority** of Scripture
- the **Necessity** of Scripture

### Definitions of the Clarity (Perspicuity) of Scripture

- *“Perspicuity is a property of Scripture as a whole and of each portion of Scripture whereby it is comprehensible to all believers who possess the normal acquired ability to understand oral communication and/or written discourse, regardless of their gender, age, education, language, or cultural background.”* - Gregg Allison
- *“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.”* - Wayne Grudem

### Biblical Basis for Clarity

6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, 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. - Deut 6:6-7

11 For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. 12 It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ 13 Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ 14 But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it. - Deut. 30:11-14

7 The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; - Ps. 19:7

13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. - 1 Tim. 4:13

15 and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. - 2 Tim. 3:15

## **Clarity of the Bible and the Reformation**

- “One of the many key issues of debate between Protestants and Catholics at the time of the Reformation was the intelligibility of Scripture: Is Scripture largely obscure, and hence to be interpreted only by the educated clergy; or is Scripture essentially clear, and hence comprehensible not only to ecclesiastics but to the common, untrained laity as well?”
  - The Catholic church held to the former position. They believed that the educated clergy (and ultimately the pope) were to be the authoritative interpreters of Scripture.
  - The Reformers argued the latter position. They contended that even the lowliest believer in Jesus Christ could comprehend Scripture.

## **What this Doctrine Doesn't Mean**

- It doesn't mean that we can understand Scripture all at once. Learning from Scripture is a process (consider the prayers of Psalm 119).
- It doesn't mean that we can understand Scripture without effort (Ezra diligently studied the Law and Peter said that Paul could be hard to understand).
- It doesn't mean that we can understand everything in Scripture apart from “ordinary means” (translation, teachers, community, etc.)
- It doesn't mean that we can understand Scripture apart from the Holy Spirit.

## **What this Doctrine Does Mean**

- The meaning of Scripture can be known. Therefore, we should read to understand, to teach, and to apply.
- We need the Spirit's help to understand and apply the truths of the Bible, so our study of the Bible should be accompanied by prayer.
- Personal Bible reading is a fruitful endeavor and should be encouraged.
- Those who teach the Bible should appeal to people's ability to understand the text.
- Translations of the Bible should be encouraged.

## **Discussion Questions**

- How can this doctrine encourage you in your study of the Bible?
- If someone was to say, “The Bible confuses me. I don't see how you can say that it is clear.” How would you respond?