

2 Timothy 3:14-17

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[0:00] I want you to think of a time when a friend, family member, fellow church member, or even maybe your own child came to you with a complex problem in his life.

! Hold that memory. He came to you for help and you want to help him. His problem is messy. It's confusing.

It's hard to understand. It's complicated in every respect. You listen. You think. You even pray while he is explaining the problem to you.

Then the most important moment happens. He stops and it is your turn to speak. You have to say with words something.

What will you say? It is the most important moment for him. Will you immediately choose his side of the situation in order to please him?

[1:03] Or will you lean on a recent podcast you heard recently on kind of his question? Or will you lean on your prior education and what a long ago professor said in a lecture you heard long ago?

The question is this. What will be the foundation from which you will build upon in helping your friend, family member, fellow church member, or child?

This is where what you believe about the sufficiency of scripture comes into real life. Maybe you can resonate with this feeling.

Life seemed more simple when you were young and in college. But now three kids deep into the married life things don't seem so simple.

Maybe life has become more complex than what you ever thought and you find it more difficult to apply scripture to yourself and your family.

[2:12] The sufficiency of scripture has real life consequences for both faith and practice. One author describes getting this doctrine wrong as both devastating and unending.

The stakes are high for getting this doctrine right. For the time we have this morning, let us dive into the doctrine of the sufficiency of scripture.

For the sake of our friend, seeking our counsel, for ourselves as we navigate through these complex times, and for the glory of God who gave us his word.

So it will not surprise you that our text today will be 2 Timothy chapter 3. So please turn with me in God's word to 2 Timothy chapter 3.

And the verses we will be zoning in on here is 14 to 17. But first, let us pray for our time together.

[3:18] So pray with me. Father, as we read your word together this morning, being reminded that your word, that you have spoken is enough for us no matter our circumstances.

Help us through the work of your son and the power of the Holy Spirit to rightly divide and interpret your word so that we might rightly live out your word for your glory and your glory alone.

Amen. 2 Timothy 3, 14 to 17. This is Paul writing his last letter to Timothy. The word of God reads, But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it 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.

All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

There are several doctrines of scripture we could teach from this text. We could talk about the necessity of scripture, its inspiration, its authority, etc.

[4:58] But today we will zoom in on the sufficiency of scripture. This doctrine asks a simple question. Is scripture enough?

Is scripture enough? My goal today is to show you from this text that the answer is yes, even though there are no literal scripture is sufficient verse in scripture.

In the complexities of this life, there is hope in looking to Jesus from God's word and the Holy Spirit for counsel in any area of our life.

At the risk of contradicting my claim, I will begin with some, I believe, helpful definitions outside of scripture for us. Then we will deep dive into 2 Timothy 3.

I will give you one short definition and one long definition. So, first, the shorter one. When I was in college, probably the most influential theologian for me was John Frame.

[6:05] Maybe because he leaned into the spicy side of theological debates. But most probably because he took really complex topics in systematic theology and explained them in really short and memorable bites.

For a simple person like me, that was a lifesaver. One definition has been with me for years, though. John Frame defines theology like this.

Theology is the application of scripture to every area of life. Theology is the application of scripture to every area of life.

In the same book, The Doctrine of the Word of God, John Frame goes further to say that scripture contains all the divine words needed for any aspect of human life.

This is his short and memorable definition of the doctrine of the sufficiency of scripture. For a longer one, I'll quote Wayne Grudem in his systematic theology.

[7:26] Scripture's sufficiency means that scripture contains all the words of God he intended his people to have. That's 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.

I'll read that one more time. Scripture's sufficiency means that scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have. At each stage of redemptive history.

And it now contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation. For trusting him perfectly. And for obeying him perfectly.

One author I read commented on Grudem goes on says one of the strongest points about this definition. Is that it allows us to say though we must believe in the progress of revelation.

[8:33] Being God didn't say everything he wanted to at once. But did so incrementally. At any point during scripture's composition. It would have been correct to say that the books already written.

Had the characteristic of sufficiency. The characteristic of sufficiency. In short, Old Testament saints.

Like David or Moses. Etc. Could rightly say in their own day. That scripture is enough. But let us be like the Bereans from Acts 17.

And let us examine the scriptures ourselves. To see if these things are so. Like I said. The stakes are high. For getting this doctrine correct.

So our text. Second Timothy 3. 14 to 17. Gives us a simple two point outline. Just a simple two point outline.

[9:34] The first two verses is the first point. The last two is the last point. Evenly divided. It is. Scripture is enough. For faith.

Scripture is enough. For faith. And that's verses 14 to 15. And the last two verses. 16 to 17. Is the second point here.

I'm dividing it up. Scripture is enough. For practice. Scripture is enough. For practice. For faith.

And practice. I want you to notice that it is not. The opposite order. Here. It is not. Practice. Then faith. But.

Paul puts it. It is faith. Then. Practice. As we'll see. The first. Is the foundation. Of the second.

[10:30] The first. Is the foundation. Of the second. So. First. Scripture. Is enough. For faith. Verses. 14 to 15.

Look with me. Verse 14 reads. But as for you. Continue. Continue. Or remain. In what you have learned. And have firmly believed. I'll say.

Faith. Knowing from whom. You learned it. Notice. The progression. From having learned. To having firmly believed.

From having learned. To having firmly believed. Not only that. That. But Timothy. Heard the word. From his family. Here.

Is a clear. Call. To parents. Although. We cannot impart. A saving knowledge. Of God. To our children. Which is the role. Of the Holy Spirit. We are called.

[11:26] To be faithful. To teach them. Scripture. So they might. Learn. The truth. Let us. Not only. Speak. The truth. And love. To our children.

Daily. But also. Help us. We also. To pray. For them. Daily. To have the gift. Of a firm. Faith. Look with me.

Next verse. 15. It reads. And how from childhood. You have been. Acquainted. With. Or known. The. Sacred. Writings. Which are able. To make you.

Wise. For salvation. Through. Faith. In Christ. Jesus. There are two things. We can say. About this verse. As it pertains. To.

Scripture's. Sufficiency. First. We can say. That Timothy. Learned. And known. The scriptures. Even from an early age. Like we just.

[12:21] Pointed out. The ESV. Puts it. As. Have been. Acquainted. With. The sacred writings. I'll be short. With this. Application. You cannot.

Do. What. You do not. Know. Know. You cannot. Do. What. You do not. Know. Another. Way. We can. Put it. Is. You cannot.

Practice. What. You have not. Heard. Or. Read. Cannot. Practice. What. You have not. Heard. Or. Read. Knowledge. Of. God. Is.

Not. Enough. For. True. Faith. As. James. Points. Out. With. The demons. Having. A belief. In. God. But. Not. A trust. Christ. As.

Paul. In. Romans. 10. Writes. So. Faith. Comes. From. Hearing. And. Hearing. Through. The word. Of. Christ. Second. On this.

[13:13] On. Verse. 15. Neither. Paul. Nor. Timothy. Had. The complete. Canon. Of. Scripture. That is. To say. Not. All. Sixty. Six. Books. Were.

Available. To. Either. Paul. Or. Timothy. Primarily. Paul. Means. The old. Testament. When. He. Uses. The word. Writings. Sacred. Writings. In. This.

Verse. This. Is. Significant. And. I point. This. Out. Because. Of. What. He. Writes. Next. Able. To. Make. You. Wise. For. Salvation. Through.

Faith. In. Christ. Jesus. Here. Is. Something. Important. I. Don't. Want. You. To. Miss. Paul. Is. Saying. That. By. Reading. The old. Covenant.

The old. Testament. The old. Covenant. You. Can. See. The new. Covenant. That. Is. Salvation. Through. Faith. In. Christ. Jesus. We.

[14:06] Can. Say. Further. That. This. Gospel. State. Statement. This. Gospel. Summary. Salvation. Through. Christ. Salvation. Through. Faith. In. Christ. Jesus. Can. Be.

Found. In. Both. The old. Testament. And. The new. Testament. Testament. Next. Enough. For. Practice. Enough. Scripture. Is. Enough. For. Practice. Read.

Verse. Sixteen. With. Me. All. Scripture. Is. Breathed. Out. By. God. And. Profitable. For. Teaching. For. Reproof. For. Correction. And.

For. Training. In. Righteousness. There is a lot we could say. About this verse. But I'll only highlight points that are related to our topic of sufficiency.

[15:01] All. Scripture. All. Scripture. Is. A. Continuation. Of. Our. Last. Point. That. Both. Old. Testament. And. New. Testament. Point. To. Salvation. In. Christ. Both.

Covenants. Point. To. The. New. Covenants. Culminating. In. Christ. Paul. Goes. On. To. Give. Two. Descriptions. Of. Scripture. That. Of. God.

Breathed. And. Profitable. Profitable. There is a detail here with the word that the ESV renders as breathed out by God that I don't want you to miss.

Paul smashes two words together to make one new word. Nowhere else does this word exist besides outside this one text.

He makes a brand new word. These two words are both God. He smashes it up against spirit or breath. He makes a new. So God breathed or breathed out by God as the ESV expands out for us.

[16:02] But for us today I want you to dwell on the fact that in this one. I'm sorry. Usually incorrectly this is used to point to the inspiration of scripture. But for us today I want you to dwell on the fact that in this one word Paul is reminding us that the spirit is required for a right understanding of the word.

The spirit is required. The second description is that of profitable or useful, advantageous, beneficial, gain. This is followed by four uses of scripture that is meant to be comprehensive in nature.

These include for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training or upbringing in righteousness. Read the last verse with me.

Verse 17. That the man of God may be complete. Equipped for every good work. To remind us of the old covenant promises leading into the new.

This man of God may be complete. Or as my older ESV renders it, competent. This word is similar to the equipped word in the last half of this verse.

[17 : 21] They share a root. So it goes. This is where I'm going with this. So it goes from complete to equipped.

I think Paul is wanting you to make that connection. For what is he equipped for? For every good work.

Since the words for all and every, all and every, are the same in the Greek language. I want to point out the connection Paul is making when beginning with, beginning with all scripture.

And then ending on every good work. Connecting scripture with good work. He completes the circle of his point that scripture is enough for both faith as well as practice.

I want you to think back to our original question. What will be the foundation from which you will build upon in helping your friend, family member, fellow church member, or child?

[18 : 34] By looking closely at the doctrine of the sufficiency of scripture, I hope you will be encouraged to challenge yourself to apply all of scripture to all of life.

That in the tense moments this week, you will take the initiative to step back and ask how scripture speaks into your current circumstance.

With time, practice, and the Holy Spirit, by seeking to obey God's word in every area of your life, you will become even more competent to speak godly counsel to those in need.

From friends, family, church members, coworkers, whoever God places in your life. And as Proverbs 3, 5 to 8 says, Do not lean into your own understanding, but into the wisdom of God alone found in his word.

Those complexities of life will still be complex, but the word remains the same. It will be true, wise, life-giving, and a sufficient...

[20 : 17] So in closing, I want to leave you with two warnings and two exhortations. Two warnings and two exhortations on the topic of the sufficiency of scripture.

The first warning is this. Beware of what I will call good book fatigue. Good book fatigue.

Every fall season, Christian book publishers all come out with their annual catalogs of books that are new and forthcoming.

If you are a huge nerd, you look forward to this every year. I do. But as time has gone by, I not only get less excited, but I tend to ask the question more and more about most of the titles I see.

Does someone really need this? But don't get me wrong. I have read some great books that were very niche that has had a big impact on me.

[21 : 28] But for us, who are in the broadly reformed corner of evangelicalism, there is a warning here. Let us guard against merely holding scripture up in high regard by saying it has both, is both authoritative and sufficient while not reflect, reflecting this in our reading practices.

I want you to compare how much time you are in scripture reading and praying to the times you are consuming even good resources on scripture.

Think books, audiobooks, podcasts, etc. Again, reading good books is good and beneficial, but let us not neglect time reading, meditating, studying, and memorizing the very words of God that he has given to us in our own language.

do not feel as if you have to read all the good books. In light of knowing that scripture is enough, let us dig deep into his word so that we will practice his word out into the world for the glory of the creator and sustainer of the universe.

So, second warning. Beware of requiring what scripture has not required. Beware of requiring what scripture has not required.

[23 : 07] Jesus warns of this in Mark 7. I'll read. This is Mark 7, 5 to 8. And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders but eat with defiled hands?

And he, Jesus, said to them, Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites. As it is written, This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.

If scripture is enough for both faith and practice as we've seen, we need to be careful to reflect this in the things we require of one another. Which leads to a question.

Does what you believe about God think theological bent? Does your theology reinforce scripture is sufficient?

[24 : 16] Or will it call into question scripture's sufficiency to others around you? Beware, brothers and sisters, of becoming convinced of a belief that you first saw in a book or heard in a podcast and only then saw in scripture.

Beware. Pray that you would see clearly the difference between the tradition of men and the commandment of God.

Now, to the exhortations. First, I'll call this exhortation, new problems, ancient answers. New problems, ancient answers.

Jeremiah 6, 16 says this, thus says the Lord, stand by the roads and look and ask for the ancient paths where the good way is and walk in it and find rest for your souls.

But they said, we will not walk in it. that was Jeremiah 6, 16. In an increasingly complex world where we do not know what might come next, rest assured that the path has been made and it is not new, but ancient.

[25 : 45] Built into this doctrine that scripture is enough is the truth that no matter how complex the next biomedical technology might be around the corner.

Scripture is enough for us to think through and make decisions on whatever the world might throw at us. Let us not refuse to walk on that ancient path.

Next, my last exhortation is actually coming from Psalm 1 and I did not tell Nathan this, but he put Psalm 1 in your bulletin, which is great.

Providence, right? The providence of the Lord. So, you can turn with me there. This is where we'll end. Psalm 1 gives us a way to read scripture well.

psalm 1. It is not only a rubric to read the entire psalms well, because it gives us a paradigm for the rest of that book, but it gives us a way to read and to think about scripture well.

[27 : 07] So, I'm going to read it. Psalm 1. The Way of the Righteous and the Wicked. Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

He is like a tree, planted by streams of water, yet yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

As one author puts it, you cannot delight in what you do not meditate on. You cannot delight in what you do not meditate on.

[28 : 42] As the Baptist pastor John brought us, who is one of the founders of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, has said, let us be those who are known to be, quote, mighty in the scriptures, mighty in the scriptures.

Let us be mighty in the scriptures, mighty in our faith, and mighty in our practice. Pray with me.