

Is The Bible Enough?

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[0:00] This morning we are reaching the final part of a short series that we've been doing over the past couple of weeks called God Speaks. And in it we're just thinking and learning a little bit more about the Bible.

And across our series we've asked four questions. Do you need the Bible? Can you trust the Bible? Can you understand the Bible? Is the Bible enough? And each of these questions connects with some of the key categories in Reformed theology about Scripture.

Do you need the Bible? Connects with the necessity of Scripture. Can you trust the Bible with the authority of Scripture? Can you understand the Bible with the perspicuity or the clarity of Scripture? And then the final question which we're asking today is, is the Bible enough?

And that's connecting us with the sufficiency of Scripture. All of these are so important for us to hold together. The necessity of Scripture is crucial. We need God to speak to us.

We need to receive His message in order to be restored into relationship with Him. The authority of Scripture is crucial. We recognize that it's God-breathed.

[1:02] It's the inspired Word of God. It's an ultimate authority. Therefore, it has to be self-authenticating. And God the Holy Spirit helps us to recognize that authority.

Last Sunday night we looked at the perspicuity or the clarity of Scripture. And as we thought about that, we highlighted the distinction between appropriate obscurity and inappropriate obscurity.

That at one level, because the Bible is God's Word, because it's teaching us about God, it's His revelation of Himself, it's always going to stretch our minds beyond our limits.

And so there's always going to be appropriate mystery, appropriate obscurity. We can't search out all the depths of God revealed in Scripture. But at the same time, we highlighted that it's so important not to have inappropriate obscurity, whereby we're kind of creating a sort of elitism around the Bible, where only the select few can understand, where access to it is limited by language or by anything like that.

Instead, we insist that the Bible should be accessible to all and that the crucial truths about salvation are clear. And we refer to the Westminster Confession of Faith that says, All things in Scripture are not alike, plain in themselves, not alike, clear unto all.

[2:20] 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 the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.

In other words, what Jesus promises you is crystal clear. That if you trust in Jesus, you will have eternal life. And what He expects from us is crystal clear.

We need to trust Him. We need to follow Him. Now, in all of these things, we've been building a little diagram. Those of you who don't come here often, I used to be an engineer. Everything I do is a diagram, either in my head or on the screen.

And so, we're building a diagram to help us think about the doctrine of Scripture. And in this diagram, I'm encouraging you all to make a connection between the nature of the Bible and the purpose of the Bible.

So, the nature of the Bible, it is God's covenant Word. He is the covenant Lord. It is His authoritative speech. It is inspired by God. It is inerrant. That's what the Bible is.

[3:25] And the purpose of the Bible is to establish God's covenant people, to draw them into a relationship with Him. And so, the nature and the purpose are tied together.

And these two categories connect to give us the attributes of Scripture that we've been looking at. So, necessity of Scripture, God needs to speak. And it needs to be His perfect Word to establish

that relationship.

The authority, if it's His covenant Word, it has authority. If we're His people, we recognize His authority. Perspicuity, if God's going to speak, He's going to speak clearly. And we need to understand what He is saying.

And so, all of it is being built up together, bit by bit. Today, we're asking our final question. And it's an absolutely crucial question. Is the Bible enough?

And the reason that this question is so important is because it connects with one of the big, big challenges that we often face in our lives today in relation to Scripture. There's actually two challenges that we often see in people, among people.

[4:32] For some people, the Bible is too much. And so, they don't want to have to accept the authority of the Bible. They don't want the ethics of the Bible. They don't want to be taught by the Bible.

And that's a rejection of this. That's a rejection of the Bible's authority, where you're saying, the Bible's too much. I don't want it. But for many other people, including many Christians, that's not the problem.

The problem is not that the Bible's too much. The problem is that there is a voice in their head that thinks, the Bible is not enough. They feel like something more needs to be added.

And that can happen in dozens of ways, and all of it's a failure to recognize the sufficiency of Scripture. So, we're going to think about this together. As we do so, we're going to be drawing from Mark 7, which Anne-Marie read.

Let me read verses 5 to 8 again. The Pharisees and the scribes asked Jesus, Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands? He 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.

[5:39] In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. You leave the commandment of God to hold to the tradition of men. As we look at this, we've got two headings, Understanding Sufficiency and Applying Sufficiency.

So, first of all, in terms of understanding sufficiency, As we've been saying, all of this connects with the nature and the purpose of the Bible. God is speaking in the Bible.

As we saw a couple of weeks ago, The Bible is called God-breathed, as Paul describes it in 2 Timothy 3. That places the Bible in its own unique category, And it serves a specific purpose.

God speaks in His covenant word in order to establish His covenant people. And the key point is that the Bible is fully sufficient for that to happen.

It's fully sufficient for that purpose. And so we don't need to add anything to it, And nothing else belongs in the category that the Bible occupies.

[6:48] So that's the big basic truth that we're saying. It's important, though, that we just unpack it a wee bit, Especially to avoid misunderstanding. Because when we talk about the sufficiency of Scripture, We're not saying that the Bible gives us teaching About everything that we need to know for every detail of life.

That's obvious, but it's just important to say it. There's so much the Bible doesn't talk about. It doesn't talk about nuclear weapons, Or global financial markets, Or social media, Or healthy exercise, Or a thousand other things that apply to our lives day by day.

So when we say that the Bible is sufficient, We're not saying that it's an exhaustive encyclopedia of information. What we mean is that if we want the information That we need to glorify God, To be saved from sin, And to live as His covenant people, Then it's the Bible, And the Bible alone, That gives us everything that we need.

Now, throughout this series, We've been referring to chapter 1 Of the Westminster Confession of Faith. I don't always have paragraphs From the Westminster Confession of Faith in my sermons, But for this series, It's been really helpful. Westminster Confession of Faith was written In the 1640s.

Again, it's just a summary Of what we think that the Bible believe, What we believe the Bible says. Chapter 1 is all about the Bible, And this paragraph 6 is all about The sufficiency of Scripture.

[8:08] It says, 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.

Nevertheless, we acknowledge The inward illumination of the Spirit of God To be necessary For the saving understanding of such things As are revealed in the Word, And that there are some circumstances Concerning the worship of God And the government of the Church Common to human actions and societies Which are to be ordered by the light of nature And Christian prudence According to the general rules of the Word, Which are always to be observed.

Okay, now that's a dense paragraph And we'll just break it down a wee bit. The thing to recognize here Is that it's actually expressing to us Three levels of how Scripture speaks into our lives. And there's examples of each of these three levels In Mark 7 that we read. So the first level is this here Where it says, Expressly set down in Scripture.

There are some things That are expressly set down in Scripture. In other words, There's many direct statements In the Bible About what we are to believe Concerning God And what duties He requires of us.

[9 : 29] So, great example In Mark 7 Jesus quotes The fifth commandment Honor your father and mother. And there's loads of other examples of this In the Bible.

Now, So there's these direct statements That the Bible makes Honor your father and mother. You can think of loads of more examples, I'm sure. And so we take those statements As they are And they're clear.

But one thing that we do have to remember Is that When we read one part of the Bible The way we handle that part Must be shaped By what the whole Bible teaches.

And this again is emphasized We mentioned this a couple of weeks ago And I'm going to mention it again It's highlighted in Again, just a little bit further In the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 1 Where it says The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture Is the Scripture itself And therefore When there's a question about The true and full sense of any Scripture Which is not manifold but one It must be searched and known By other places that speak more clearly.

Now what's that saying? Well, what that means is Is that when you take Any direct statement of Scripture You have to make sure That you interpret it In the light of the whole Bible. So you look at that statement It says Honor your father and mother So you think Right, I want to honor my father and mother And I will do whatever my parents tell me And that way I will honor God.

[10 : 44] And that's true In lots and lots and lots and lots of ways But it's not necessarily always true Because for example If you had a parent Who was completely opposed To the Christian faith And who insisted That you never read the Bible That you never prayed That you never honored God And that you embraced a life Of apostasy Obviously You would not do it.

And so That's just an example Of how the rest of Scripture The rest of the Bible Helps you interpret The direct statements That are expressly Set down In Scripture And so That's a very important principle To remember Whenever you read in the Bible It's also important For remembering How the Old Testament Connects to the New Testament Things are expressly set down But Everything The whole of Scripture A specific part of Scripture Is interpreted In light of the whole of Scripture The second So that was the first level That we had there We had expressly set down there The second level That we have Is something that By good and necessary consequence May be deduced From Scripture What does that mean?

What that basically means Is that there are Things that That there are Appropriate And logical Consequences That can be drawn From what Scripture Teaches And you see a very clear example Of this In Mark So In Mark 7 14 Jesus Sets out this principle About What defiles a person And He's saying Look it's not what goes Into you That defiles you It's what comes out of you That defiles you And that stands In great contrast To all the religious leaders Around them Who are saying You mustn't eat this You mustn't touch that You mustn't go near this Etc etc Jesus is saying It's not the outside stuff That defiles you It's the stuff That's inside you And that comes out of you And so Jesus sets forth This teaching Which is expressly set down But then You will see That I've forgotten to put it on Ah This is going to Totally spoil my thunder Okay So Verse 19 If you can see it If you can throw Verse 19 up To see if you can Says

Should I come up With a screen It said Mark adds There's a little statement That's a good And necessary consequence Where Mark says Therefore he declares All foods clean See it there at the end In brackets That's a little statement That Mark has added And that's a good And necessary consequence Of what Jesus Has just taught So it's a very clear example Of what we mean The things that are expressly set down Reveal truths from God And there are appropriate And logical consequences That can be drawn from that Another very clear example You can go back to the

other slides Another clear example Would be racism That word's not in the Bible But it's actually The Bible's teaching That all humanity Is made in the image of God And made equal In the image of God It's that teaching That actually gives us That's what gives humanity The moral basis To recognize That racism Is wrong We recognize racism

As morally wrong As a good And necessary consequence Of what the Bible teaches About the nature Of humanity So the first category We have Is expressly set down Second category Is things that are deduced By good and necessary consequence And then the third category Is that there are Some circumstances Which are to be ordered By the light of nature And Christian prudence According to the general rules Of the word Which are always to be observed What do we mean by that?

[14 : 25] Well basically what that's saying Is that although Scripture Doesn't talk about Every detail of life The principles set down In Scripture Should shape Every part Of life And you see A negative example Of this In Mark 7 Jesus is saying to them Moses said Honor your father and mother Whoever reviles Father and mother Should surely die But if you say If a man tells his father And mother Whatever you would have had From me is korban That means I'm not going To help my parents I'm going to give it to God Instead And you're no longer Permitting someone To do anything For his father and mother You're making void The word of God By your tradition That you've handed down And many such things You do And that other phrase there Is just emphasizing A negative version Of what we're highlighting here That there were so many things That the Pharisees And the leaders were doing That were not shaped By Scripture And instead They were just Doing it their own way And so The opposite Of that Is what the confession Is describing And it's what the Bible Is expecting That the decisions

That we make Although the Bible Won't tell us What to do We're allowed The principles of the Bible To shape that So a good example This especially applies To what the church does A good example would be What time should we have church?

The Bible doesn't tell you What time to have church It doesn't set any rules But the Bible sets many principles That would say Well we would want As many people as possible To come to church We would want coming to church To be at a time That's suitable And convenient And appropriate And most of all Fulfilling the command To love our neighbour To make it as accessible As possible So 11 o'clock On a Sunday morning In the middle of the village That seems like An appropriate time To have it Certainly it's better Than having church At four in the morning In a cave On the moor But If our government Was trying to kill us Because we were worshipping Jesus Which is true for some people In the world Then having church In a cave On the moor At four a.m.

Would be a good idea And so you're just Applying the principles Of the word To different things in life And so these three things These three levels Are just helpful to remember Directly set down Good and necessary consequence Or shaped By the principles That scripture sets by Sets before us That according to The light of nature Christian prudence General rules of the word All of these things Are to be observed That's what we mean When we talk about Sufficiency But the big question is How do we apply it To our lives Well there's one big point Of application That I guess is obvious But it needs to be said Again and again The big point of application Is that nothing Is to be added To the Bible Nothing is to be added And that's captured In the paragraph That we keep coming back to In the Westminster Confession We don't add New revelations Of the spirit And we don't add

Traditions Of men Now Westminster Confession of Faith Was written in the aftermath Of the Reformation And during the Reformation Those two things Were two of the big problems The traditions of men Was one of the things That had given rise To the Reformation In the first place The medieval church Was full of many Many things That had been added To scripture According to tradition But in the context Of the Reformation You also had a group Called the Anabaptists Who had claimed To sort of receive New revelations That they'd heard New things from the spirit And they were kind of Adding stuff To the Bible And some of their behaviour Was really quite strange And some of it Became a bit dangerous Both of these things Were big issues At the Reformation That's why it's in The Westminster Confession Of Faith We don't add to the Bible With new revelations Of the spirit We don't add to the Bible With traditions of men But this wasn't Just a problem At the Reformation It's still a problem today People claim to have New revelations of the spirit In addition to the Bible And lots of people Including people

[18:27] In our own context Including me We struggle to let go Of our traditions And we struggle To distinguish Between what is In the Bible And what's just A tradition And all of this Is just taking us back To the fact that The Bible occupies A unique place In the life of the Christian And in the life Of the church And that's again highlighted I know I keep coming back To Westminster Confession Of Faith Chapter 1 This is the last paragraph In it It just emphasises That God's word Is the supreme judge For all controversies Of religion Etc, etc, etc That place of the Bible Is unique Now I want to just draw As we move to a conclusion Just four practical lessons That arise from all of this Number one Don't add to the Bible That's obvious It's clear It's a recurring problem And it was a problem In Mark 7 That's the massive mistake

Of the Pharisees Jesus highlights that So clearly in verse 8 You leave the commandment Of God To hold To the tradition Of men It's been a massive problem Throughout the history Of the church Medieval church Reformation Today This is a huge problem People add to the Bible And the key point Is this When people do it They think That they're pleasing God The Pharisees Thought That they were Pleasing God They thought That they were Impressing God By adding all this Extra stuff But they weren't They were undermining God's word Because the whole Of our theology Is grounded in the fact That when God Says something And when God Does something It is Absolutely Enough And there's a great quote From a Dutch theologian Called Herman Bavinck Who said The work of Christ Does not need To be supplemented By the good works Of believers And the word of Christ Does not need

To be supplemented By the tradition Of the church So lesson one Don't add to the Bible Lesson two Is don't alter The Bible And again You see this In Mark 7 Jesus speaks to them About the fifth commandment Honor your father and mother And the Pharisees They hadn't rejected That commandment But they tweaked it And they tweaked it To say Well yes Honor your father and mother But you can actually say What I was going to do For my father and mother Is now What we call Corban This kind of Act of devotion Given to God So I don't actually Need to do this stuff For my parents Because I'm doing this stuff For God Instead And so we're not Rejecting the commandment But we're just Tweaking it A little bit And that is so So easy to do And we can do it Where we think Yes I respect the Bible But But I kind of Want it on my own terms And And that can so easily happen And sometimes This mindset

Can produce the very Opposite of outcomes So I've met people Who are so particular About their convictions In relation to the Bible They've stopped coming to church All together Because No church is really good enough And I find that Quite astonishing But That's the thing It's like I'm actually so committed to this I'm not going to come to church at all And other people Are incredibly committed to church And will be there all the time But it has to be The way they like it It has to be Their preferences In terms of clothing In terms of singings In terms of patterns Whatever it might be In a thousand ways I do this too I'm not I mean I've made that same mistake As well In a thousand ways We can alter the Bible To suit our own preferences That's what the Bible That's what the Pharisees Were doing But Jesus Makes it very clear That they are making Void the word of God By doing so They're nullifying God's commandment To add to the Bible To alter the Bible Is actually to reject the Bible

Lesson number three Don't filter the Bible We see an example of this In Mark 7 In these verses here You find what you often see In the New Testament Which is a list of Of sins And You see these In several places A list of sins That Jesus regards As a As a huge problem In our lives What do I do When I read a list Like that?

[23:07] I filter it In my head Straight away Because you read Things like that You think Theft Murder Adultery Absolutely That's shocking I would never do it Coveting That's different Envy Well Slander Yeah but they were Really annoying So it was okay What I said Don't we do that?

We filter We filter these kind of lists What I mean by that Is that Jesus gives us A list of these things That should not be In our lives As Christians And we agree A hundred percent With most of them But some of them Will actually find A place in their hearts Where they're accepted And when we're doing that We're filtering the Bible And we just want to Remind ourselves That we do not Want to do that The sufficiency of Scripture Means that we recognise That list And we recognise The damage That all of those things Can cause In our lives So don't add to the Bible As lesson one Don't alter the Bible As lesson two Don't filter the Bible As lesson three The most important one As lesson four Don't underestimate the Bible Do not underestimate the Bible And this is what we see Magnificently In the latter part Of chapter seven Jesus goes to Tyre And Sidon The last person in the world That

Jesus should help In the eyes of the people Around him

As far as they were concerned The last person in the world That Jesus should help Would have been a woman Who was a Gentile A Syrophoenician By birth Jesus tests her In the words That he speaks to her And she responds With a statement Of beautiful humility Towards herself And beautiful confidence Towards Jesus When she refers to herself As a dog She's just recognising That she's not worthy Of anything But when she recognises That dogs can eat crumbs She's recognising That even a crumb From Jesus Is everything That she needs Back in the Decapolis In verses 31 to 37 Jesus heals a man Who was deaf And unable to speak And he heals him With one word Ephapha And the result Is that people Were astonished Beyond measure The big point Is this We must never Underestimate God's word And when we Insist On the sufficiency Of scripture We're not doing that

Because we think The Bible's adequate And acceptable We're doing that Because the Bible Is astonishingly Powerful Hebrews captures That amazingly well The word of God Is living And active Sharper than Any two-edged sword Piercing to the division Of soul and of spirit Of joints and of marrow And discerning the thoughts And intentions Of the heart So We must not add to the Bible We must not alter the Bible We must not filter the Bible We must not underestimate the Bible So what do we need to do?

We need to trust the Bible And that's taking us back To our diagram To the nature And purpose of the Bible We trust the Bible Because in it God is speaking And we're confident In the power of the Bible Because in it God is speaking And all these pitfalls We've highlighted Are all a failure To trust God And that's why The sufficiency Of scripture What you think about that Is actually a penetrating Test Of trust If we are asking The question Is the Bible Enough At the root Of that question Is whether or not We actually Trust God And if we add To the Bible All to the Bible Filter the Bible It's all because We don't believe That God's word Is trustworthy Enough And you know This is where we We are seeing something

[27:01] This is exposing The human heart In a very powerful way Because often we think That The big problem of sin Is that it means that People aren't good enough For God Sin leaves us Guilty before God It means that we're Not good enough for God And of course That's true In so many ways But really The depth of The impact That sin has had Is deeper than that Because at the core Of sin Is not That Not just that We're not good enough For God But at the core of sin Is the fact that It leaves us With the mindset That God Is not good enough For us And Because of that We don't want to listen To what he says We don't want to follow him And instead We want to do things In our own way Sufficiency The whole question Of the sufficiency Of the Bible Exposes our hearts In a very powerful way

I've got one final thing I want to say As we close Because the sufficiency Of scripture Also clarifies What is A sufficient Response To Jesus The sufficiency Of scripture Clarifies What constitutes A sufficient Response To Jesus And this is Massively Important For anybody Who is here Who feels Like they just Need something More To happen To be sure That you're a Christian Or to become A Christian Or to tell people That you're a Christian Because so often We are paralyzed By a sense Of insufficiency We think That our knowledge Is not sufficient What's happened To us In terms of A kind of Conversion experience Is not sufficient

It's not what Happened to other people The kind of Sorting myself Out And putting my life In order That's not sufficient There's still Way Too many things I need to sort out And my ability To sustain things If I do follow Jesus That's not sufficient Either I'm probably Going to mess up It's so easy To think like that It's so easy To be paralyzed By a sense Of insufficiency But all of that Is a massive mistake Because in the gospel The only person Who needs to be sufficient For your salvation Is Jesus And in his Perfectly sufficient word He's telling you That he has done Everything Absolutely Everything And all he asks you To do Is to trust him Everybody who comes To Jesus This is true Of the Syrophoenician woman

It's true of the Deaf man Who couldn't speak Either It's true of me It's true of everybody Else Everybody who comes To Jesus Comes as A monumental Pile Of insufficiency And Jesus says That does not matter Because I have done Everything That you need Amen Thank you.