

Dt. 4:1-4 (WCF 1:6) “The Sufficiency of Scripture”

For the Children: People often underestimate things. You buy 6 eggs at the supermarket, thinking that will be enough. Later, you find you need more – so it’s back to the shop again. With God’s Word, however, you can never “underestimate.” It can always give us everything we need to live as God’s children. If we are missing something it is our fault, not a problem with God’s Word. Because the Bible is enough to teach us how to be saved and how to serve the Lord, we should learn to use it and rely on it far more than we do.

Questions: How can we learn to rely more on the Bible? How do people try to “add” to the Bible? How do they try to “take away” from it?

Introduction:

First Point: The Definition of Sufficiency

- 1) Complete or Not?: “Sufficient” means something is enough, completely adequate. In Dt. 4 this is put in terms of not adding or taking away from the “theory and practice” God has given in His Word. WCF 1:6 puts it in terms of having the whole of all things necessary for giving glory to God in faith and life, and for salvation. It is all in God’s Word directly or may be deduced by “good and necessary consequence.” Historically, it has often been put in terms of Scripture’s “perfections” – the complete containing of all necessary for the above, rather than needing some supplement
- 2) For God’s Purpose: That does not mean that the Bible is sufficient for answering all possible questions. It is sufficient for the purposes for which God gave it – to glorify and worship Him in all of life, and to know how sinners may be saved through Christ
- 3) Sufficient in Its Time: Dt. 4:2 states that God’s OT Law given through Moses may receive no addition or subtraction from man. The Word given then was sufficient for its time. But the Lord Himself could and did add to it, until it was completed in the NT (Heb. 1:1-2). Now it is completely sufficient for the rest of time. See 2 Tim. 3:15-17. At no stage, however, could men tamper with God’s Word

Second Point: The Obligation of Sufficiency

- 1) The Obligation of Praise: We should praise the Lord that He has shown His infinite knowledge and wisdom by giving us a Word sufficient for serving Him in all of life, as well as showing us the Christ through whom we are saved
- 2) The Obligation to Listen: Moses commanded Israel to “listen” to God’s Word which he was teaching them, rather than adding or taking. Sufficiency implies that we must take in the “theory,” the doctrine, by reading and meditating on God’s Word
- 3) The Obligation to Act: Moses also indicates that God has given this sufficient Word for Israel to “perform” and “keep” – the practice side of things
- 4) The Obligation to Avoid Tampering: The Word is a *covenant*-Word, sworn by the Lord on oath. It may not be tampered with by bringing in anything from man. To do so also interferes with the ability of God’s people to learn what He requires. Many have tried to do so, to decrease man’s duties or invent new ones, added traditions from the church or invent false prophecies. See Gal. 1:8, Rev. 22:19-19 on how serious a sin this is

Third Point: The Consequences of Accepting or Rejecting Sufficiency

- 1) A Matter of Life and Death: In addition to Gal. 1:8 and Rev. 22:17-18, Dt. 18:20 also shows that tampering with the Word deserves death. Subtracting from it led to the death of many at Baal-Peor (Dt. 4:3). In contrast, those who listen to the Word receive “life” (Dt. 4:1, 4). All those who held fast to the Lord at Baal-Peor lived. This is a picture of spiritual and eternal life graciously bestowed on all who hold to the Word and repent when they fail to do so completely
- 2) Possession of the Land: Similarly, holding to God’s Word would enable Israel to enter the Promised Land – a picture of how those who trust to Scripture’s sufficiency today will inherit the heavenly land

Conclusion:

Westminster Confession of Faith 1:6

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. 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 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.