

Have You Not Read? The Sufficiency of Scripture for True Life-Transformation

Introduce yourself, goals and prayers for conference ...

It's been a privilege to be able to help a handful of churches over the last couple of years strive to understand and cultivate a culture of mutual care for one another in the church.

Ultimately, the care we are talking about primarily is SPIRITUAL care – though mercy ministries, and serving one another is a vital calling as well.

My hope is that you build some theological convictions, and ecclesiastical commitments, and some practical tools to help provide care and counsel to one another more often, and more effectively, in order to see the work of spiritual transformation—spiritual growth—happen.

Introduction

Transformation only truly comes from God, through the Scripture. We must begin with the conviction that God Himself has spoken in Scripture, that God's Word is powerful for the transforming of the soul.

We should care ENOUGH, and care EFFECTIVELY, so that we see the image of Christ being formed in one another.

2 Corinthians 3:18 — 18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Clearly, Paul is not talking about every individual Christian having a literal vision of the glory of the Lord as a means of transformation!

How do we see and behold the glory of the Lord specifically in this age? We do so as we see and behold Him through the Revelation of Himself to mankind—through the Bible.

So the means of transformation is the Word of God, which is inspired by the Holy Spirit, who Paul here also delineates is the agent of that transformation—“...this comes from the Spirit!”

As Christians, we are committed to the Bible as the inerrant and authoritative Word of God. We believe it is reliable and true from beginning to end. We embrace that the truth of God's Word is the standard by which we must test all other truth-claims. Scripture must be both the foundation and the final authority for everything we hold true.

Unless these axioms dominate our view of Scripture and our perspective of counseling, we will never be able to legitimately claim to be “biblical counselors.”

Is this really true? Is this what we really embrace (and SHOULD embrace)?

Is the Bible, in and of itself (with the Spirit's help), sufficient to furnish us with a complete perspective on every circumstance, condition, relationship, problem, or malady in life?

Does the Bible itself even make this claim? Can we be serious? How is the Bible sufficient to understand and solve all of the problems of life, when we know many of them are not spoken about in Scripture?

We don't see terms in Scripture like PTSD, depression, or panic attacks, or narcissism, or Borderline Personality Disorder. How can it help us with those problems, then?

Defining Scripture's Sufficiency

For the very reason mentioned (that the Bible does not mention many of the problems people experience today), scores of Christians who are quick to affirm that the Bible is true and authoritative often hesitate to affirm that it is sufficient to address all of the issues of life.

Instead of seeking answers to problems like those, they perhaps just assume that those are modern problems, that can only really be addressed with modern solutions.

While many give lip service to Scripture's authority, inspiration, and inerrancy, a denial of its sufficiency is dangerously close to denying its authority. How can we claim it is authoritative if we must regularly point people away from the Bible to other sources of "truth" when they have difficult issues in life—issues that we (the church) should provide care for.

What do we mean when we say the Scripture is sufficient?

Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) – 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."

In a sentence, "We mean that the Bible is an adequate guide for all matters of faith and conduct."¹

The church, by and large, simply does not believe that anymore. The average Christian seems to assume that something more than Scripture is needed to help us cope in a modern world.

Christian book outlets are full of books offering advice drawn from sources other than the Bible on almost every conceivable subject—parenting, manhood, womanhood, success, self-esteem, relationships, leadership, counseling, and church ministry.

¹ John F. MacArthur, Jr., "Embracing the Authority and Sufficiency of Scripture." Much of the material in the opening sections of this seminar is adapted from this article.

Common “Attacks” on Scripture’s Sufficiency

What are some of the ways we see the doctrine of Scripture’s sufficiency “attacked” or undermined in the church and/or society?

❖ Self-help books/experts

Parenting, finances, leadership, and ministry! It hardly matters what the topic, you can find a self-help book in Christian bookstores completely void of biblical content or principles. The collective influence of this approach to life is disastrous. It teaches us to place our confidence and find our stability in something other than God and the truth of the Word.

❖ Pastoral pragmatism

And many pastors contribute to the problem by basing their own methods and philosophies on unbiblical models that resemble corporate management and marketing more than it imitates the apostles and the early church. Many churches supplement biblical teaching with entertainment, or secular marketing methods, or simply are “dumbing down” the truth to attract unbelievers to the church.

Any of those pragmatic approaches can subtly undermine that teaching and applying the Word of God is sufficient to meet people’s spiritual needs or shape and grow God’s church.

❖ Spiritual mysticism

There is a common (and increasing) notion that Christians need to listen for God to “speak to them personally” in some mystical way. The thought is, “this is how we are guided, how we make decisions, or how we seek peace and a personal relationship with God.”

Sadly, that mindset can also undermine our confidence that God speaks to us through inspired Scripture, and that it is able to make us “adequate, fully equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:17). Why read Scripture, when you believe God speaks through “strong impressions” in your mind. Those who are continually looking elsewhere to hear God speak and give direction betray a lack of confidence in God’s sufficient Word.

❖ Tolerance and political correctness

This has expanded beyond the cultural pressure to redefine marriage and the legitimate bounds of a moral relationship, or sexual identity.

It is almost a cultural anathema today to suggest that anxiety, depression, or even a child’s behavior is something other than a medical problem. Many “evangelicals” are caving by embracing the accusation that biblical guidelines and definitions are too superficial for the “modern world.”

We hear it perhaps in statements like, “You don’t think less of a person when they see a doctor for a broken bone, so why do you think less of a person who sees a therapist for depression?” First, sufficiency should NEVER cause a lack of sympathy for people in their suffering (and depression is a legitimate form of suffering). But a broken bone, and clinical depression are not

medical equivalents either. But this does highlight another way the culture has spoken into (and against) the idea of Scriptures sufficiency.

- ❖ The presumption of medical causes (biogenic theory of mood disorders; chemical imbalances)

Many problems that came formerly came under the heading of spiritual care and pastoral counsel are now quickly presumed to have medical causes (*and there are a number of cultural, practical, and philosophical reasons why, as we will see in a future session*).

The irony of sending people to modern methods for their modern problems, is that the modern methods are constantly changing.

While real medical problems can and should be addressed through medical means, and taking a medication for a mood disorder is definitely not inherently sinful, there are often no actual tests available or conducted to determine if there is a physical cause to these types of problems. It is almost always assumed, and that assumption is most often not the case.

The Scripture's Own Claim of Sufficiency

Where, how, and to what degree does the Scripture itself claim to be sufficient? This is an important question, and one the Bible itself addresses many times.

Reading the entirety of Psalm 119 would be a good place to start. The psalmist clearly holds the Scriptures in high esteem as God's means of sanctification.

2 Peter 1:2–4 — 2 May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. **3** 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, **4** 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.

John 17:17 — 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

Luke 11:28 — 28 But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

1 Corinthians 2:13–15 — 13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. **14** The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. **15** The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.

Hebrews 4:12–13 — 12 For 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. **13** And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

James 1:25 — 25 But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

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

Acts 20:20, 27, 32 — 20 I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house,... **27** for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God... **32** And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Deuteronomy 6:5–9 — 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. **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. **8** You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. **9** You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Psalms 19:7–12 — 7 The **law** of the LORD is **perfect, reviving the soul**; the **testimony** of the LORD is **sure, making wise** the simple; **8** the **precepts** of the LORD are **right, rejoicing the heart**; the **commandment** of the LORD is **pure, enlightening the eyes**; **9** the **fear** of the LORD is **clean, enduring forever**; the **rules** of the LORD are **true**, and righteous altogether. **10** More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. **11** Moreover, by them is your **servant warned**; in keeping them there is great reward. **12** Who can **discern his errors**? Declare me innocent from hidden faults.

A Detailed Description of Scripture's Sufficiency

The Bible itself says that it makes the man of God complete, equipped for every good work.

Notice the context of this passage. Chapter three opens by describing a litany of problems that will exist in the church in the difficult last days that are upon us. He names selfishness, greed, arrogance, pride, disobedient children, malice, gossip, and many others (2 Tim 3:1-4). The reasons people will fall into these various sins while still maintaining connection to the local church (see 3:5) is that they will have been deceived and embrace teaching that is contrary to Scripture (see 3:6, 13). Timothy has avoided this deception and error, however (3:10).

And now Paul exhorts him to continue in the teaching he had received. His given motivation is that the Scripture is God's inspired and powerful means of saving and transforming lives.

2 Timothy 3:14–17 — 14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it **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. **16** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for

reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **17** that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

I want to take the time to unpack the context and intent of this passage that describes in detail the nature of Scripture, and specifically how God has designed it to make us complete and equipped for every good work ...

... it is sufficient to TRANSFORM us into being and doing everything God has called us to be and do! It is sufficient to be the SOURCE of truth to provide all the SPIRITUAL CARE that we need and are called to provide for one another.

Let's examine the Apostle Paul's detailed description of inspired Scripture's sufficiency for adequately outfitting the believer to live and please God in every way.

Sacred Writings

- The Word of God is **sacred**. The other word for "holy" means "set apart" and has reference to the character of the thing being spoken about—holy people, saint, etc.
- This word means *sacred, consecrated*, and doesn't speak of its character as much as its standing or relationship. Something is sacred because of its special, close connection with God (His power and/or presence).
 - Holy city (Mat. 4:5)
 - Holy temple (dozens of times in NT)
 - Sacred services (1 Cor. 9:13)
- It is sacred or *unique*, because of its unique message and because of the intimate relationship between its message and its author. It is a book unlike any other book.

Which are Able

- The Bible has power [that is the word's meaning], the ability to transform lives.

Hebrews 4:12 – For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

- The Scripture is the Holy Spirit's tool for working in the minds and hearts of God's people. The Spirit is the **AGENT** of transformation, and the Sacred Writings are the powerful **MEANS** of transformation!
- It is our great privilege to minister this word to others, for the God-glorifying, Christ-exalting, purpose of spiritual transformation ... in any, and every context we have opportunity.

All Scripture

- It is **ALL** inspired. Down to the very last words.

Matthew 5:18-19 – "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. 19 "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

- It is *SCRIPTURE* that is inspired, not the writers. We often talk of "inspired writers," but we should speak of "inspired writings."
- It was not the writers but the message they inscripturated that bears the particular mark of God's breath.

Inspired

- Inspired really means God-breathed. The men were simply agents of God's breath.

2 Peter 1:21 – for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

Acts 3:18 – But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled.

- Important for them to know because most of the world was illiterate, and did not have respect for the written words of men.
- God-breathed means that the written word is as much and as certainly God's voice as if He were standing here expiring it out audibly right now.

Profitable

- The word of God is "*useful*" for accomplishing God's purposes.
- It is not for our amusement, or critical analysis, or to satisfy our intellectual curiosity.
- To neglect its usefulness, is to neglect the very reason God gave it.

Titus 1:1 (NIV) – Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness.

2 Peter 1:4 – For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

- It is imperative that we put the word to use for the purpose for which it was designed. The Bible was given to transform lives—evangelize, and edify.

And the inspired sacred writings, the Bible, is useful and profitable for FOUR things:

1. Teaching

This is usually the aspect of the Bible's design and purpose that I think most Bible believing churches at least understand, and generally do a good job of accomplishing.

We have solid doctrinal statements, and we have good Bible teachers. We are able to communicate and embrace sound doctrine, and biblical principles of church polity, ordinances, roles, and the nature of God, man, sin, and salvation (the saving gospel).

But again, I very often see a disconnect in Christians and churches, that betrays a subtle belief that the Bible is good for salvation, and for doctrine, but there are certain kinds of problems that the Bible just doesn't understand or teach us about.

Some people don't "really" or "fully" or "truly" believe that the Bible is ...

- The Bible is comprehensive.

If we take the time and make the effort to progressively and prayerfully understand the Bible adequately, there are Scriptural principles that cover EVERY area of life.

2 Peter 1:2-4 — **2** May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. **3** 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, ... **4** so that through them you may ***become partakers of the divine nature***, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world ...

It may take diligent study and some hard work, but the answers are available. We either embrace that its teaching is comprehensive, or we have to somehow explain away (or DENY) that statements like this are true.

To NOT know it—or be pursuing more knowledge of God's Word—is to fail miserably as Christians (and certainly, as leaders and counselors).

But, TEACHING has a goal – the goal is NOT merely KNOWLEDGE! We not only have to know it, we have to know it in order to observe [keep, obey] it.

Matthew 28:18-20 – And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. **19** "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **20** ***teaching them to observe*** all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Luke 11:28 – But He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who ***hear*** the word of God, ***and observe it.***"

Colossians 1:9-10 – For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, **10** ***so that you may walk*** in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

2. **Reproof ("Conviction")**

- The word (*elegchos* [n], *elegcho* [v]) is best translated conviction.

- What do we think when we hear the word “conviction.”
 - *A strong personal belief* – I have a strong “conviction” that expository preaching should be the primary form of preaching.
 - *Feelings of guilt* – I am “convicted” about my lack of discipline in completing the work for “Men Devoted to Godliness.”
 - It is also used as a legal term to communicate *a judgment passed in a court of law* – A judge hands down a “conviction,” the criminal has been “convicted” of a crime.
- How does the Bible use the term? [*Answer – the third way primarily*]

John 8:46 – Which one of you convicts Me [can prove me guilty - NIV] of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?

James 2:9 – But if you show partiality, you are committing sin *and* are convicted by the law as transgressors [*a standard is applied that proves you guilty*].

Revelation 3:14-19 – “And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: 15 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. 16 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. 17 'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, 18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. 19 'Those whom I love, I **REPROVE** and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent.

- Here, Jesus is building His case against them, for the purpose of pronouncing them guilty and calling them to repentance.
- There is another word (*epitimao*) that means rebuke.
 - “Rebuke” refers primarily to the pointing out of wrong – it can be thought of as the charge against someone.
 - “Convict” [reprove] implies not merely the charge, but the truth of the charge, and further manifestation of the truth of the charge, with the intention of securing acknowledgement or admission of the truth of the charge.
- It is possible for someone to have been “convicted” in the biblical sense (having had their error exposed, proven, etc.), and not experience the appropriate sorrow for that error or sin.
- He convicts His children [proves and pronounces guilty] because he loves us (Rev. 3:19).
- They needed to be convicted (convinced) of their sin, because they did not know that they were wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.

- Obviously teaching and conviction are not mutually exclusive – conviction occurs as the teaching of Scripture is presented, understood and heeded.
- This is why it is important to define, describe and address the problems of life in the same terms that the Bible uses, whether it is a sin, or weakness, or the response to our weaknesses.

3. **Correction**

Thankfully, the Bible doesn't just define and diagnose our cancerous spiritual disorders; it can also surgically remove the malignancy and corruption.

- **Correct [Gk. Epanorthoso]** – means to stand something up, make it stand again.
- We use the phrase, “put someone back on his feet.”
- Jay Adams says, “Correction is God picking us up, brushing us off, turning us around, and giving us a shove in the right direction, all, of course, by the Scriptures ministered in the power of the Spirit” (*How to Help People Change*, p. 147)

There are several key components to the process of correction (some of which overlap at points).

[I CAN CRUISE THROUGH, OR SKIP THESE, DEPENDING ON HOW MUCH TIME I HAVE]

- **Repentance**

The word literally means to “change one’s mind.” Once you know what is right (TEACHING), the result of being convicted (CONVICTION, REPROOF) is to change your mind. Good teaching, which brings conviction, leads us to a turning point in our behavior and relationships toward God and others.

- You will desire to see and pursue righteousness in the strength God supplies. True repentance issues forth with fruit in keeping with that repentant heart (Luke 3:8).
- That is easily evident in the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22 ff.).
- Repentance and correction relate by recognizing that we must not only put off the sinful practice, but also put on the corresponding fruit of Spirit filled righteousness.

- **Confession (agreeing with God and others)**

Literally, the word means “to say the same thing,” “to agree to/with.” The purpose of confession is to specifically and objectively acknowledge sin and request forgiveness (not just say I’m sorry). It is not primarily to relieve oneself of the feelings of guilt.

All sin is against God first, and should be confessed to Him first. Many sins are committed against others and should be acknowledged and confessed to them as well. Without confession and a request for forgiveness, reconciliation to God and others cannot take place.

- **Forgiveness (seeking and granting)**

Forgiveness, and ultimately reconciliation, come only when sin is properly acknowledged, not just when someone expresses regret (which could easily be mistaken for regret over consequences, or regret for having been exposed).

- Asking forgiveness obligates the other person to consider if they are now going to do what the bible obligates them to do—and it is a serious offense to be unwilling to forgive (Luke 17:3, 4; Matt 6:15).
- Forgiveness from God and others is essentially a commitment to do three things.
 - To not hold a person’s sins against them (i.e., bring it up again, with the intent of accusing or hurting them with it).
 - To not dwell on it yourself (it should not affect you treatment of them).
 - To not discuss it or disclose it to others.

- **Forsaking Sin (“Putting Off”)**

Proverbs 28:13 – He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses **and forsakes** them will find compassion.

Forsake means, “to let go of, leave, abandon.” Too often we just confess our sin, pray God will help us change, and get up expecting everything to be different – “The kiss and make up syndrome.”

Christians don’t just break bad habits—unbelievers can do that. Christians **REPLACE** bad habits with good ones—God-honoring habits. This first takes **self-denial**—which necessarily takes searching our hearts for the thoughts and motives of our actions.

The pressures of temptation, trials and circumstances are God’s way of squeezing our sinful hearts until the pus of selfishness and sin come to the surface (Lou Priolo’s illustration, from *Teach Them Diligently*).

Forsaking sin can require drastic measures.

Matthew 5:29-30 – And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell.

A serious break with sin involves willingly **removing** those things that tempt you to continue in sin (activities, situations, people, etc.). It may involve **structuring** your life to make no provision for the flesh (Rom. 13:14). And it may necessitate **accountability** and help from others.

- **Walking in Righteousness (“Putting On”)**

Sin not only affects our relationship with God, it also often fouls up our relationships with others. Putting on virtue, therefore, often begins with restoring the relationships we have broken by our sin—how do we love, serve, show patience/kindness to others with which we have had poor and hurtful relations with previously?

The correction of Scripture always involves seeking the virtue that must replace the sin pattern from the past.

Ephesians 4:28 — 28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

In this very context of “putting off, renewing the mind, and putting on,” we also see.

Ephesians 4:31–32 — 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. **32** Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

So the “CORRECTION” that the Bible talks about here, that is what the Scripture is designed to produce, to profit us, and to be used for,...

... it is a correction that restores and renews and propels us toward turning from sin and walking in righteousness.

But it isn't a temporary shift, or a momentary action God has designed for it to produce. Rather, it is designed to be a permanent change, something that you are TRAINED to produce, over and over again.

That is the fourth way Paul describes that the Scriptures should PROFIT us, or is to be USEFUL for producing change and transformation!

4. **Training in Righteousness**

- What does this word (training, *paideia*) mean? It means training, instruction, **discipline**, or to educate.

Ephesians 6:4 – And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the **discipline** (*paideia*) and instruction (*nouthesia*) of the Lord.

Hebrews 12:4-13 – You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; 5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the **discipline** of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reproved by Him; 6 For those whom the Lord loves He **disciplines**, And He scourges every son whom He receives." 7 It is for **discipline** that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not **discipline**? 8 But if you are without **discipline**, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to **discipline** us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they **disciplined** us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He **disciplines us** for our good, that we may share His holiness. 11 All **discipline** for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained [*gumnadzo*, 1 Timothy 4:7] by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. 12 [What is the goal] Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that *the limb* which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

- With the instruction, reproof, scourging, training images, it is easy to see the overlap, and the way these ideas work together to the end of personal holiness.
- Training involves discipline in all of its facets.
 - Being taught over and over again (learning by repetition in word and action)
 - Being scourged or chastised (not emphasized here, but still a potential part of the process).
 - Being made to practice something over and over again (this would be the emphasis, in the text, and for counseling).
- Why is this so important?
 - We can be taught what is right – and most of us know this.
 - We can be taught where we are wrong – and usually we are aware of these shortcomings.
 - We can be corrected – told what to do—even how to do it.
- ***But often the process breaks down, and we find ourselves not following through on our commitments, or enduring in doing what is right.***
- *That can happen for at least two reasons:*
 - Misunderstanding the reasons/motivations/goals for our actions.

We should be aiming at, and motivated by, a desire to reflect the glory of God in our lives—to live as worshippers of the true and living God. We are to be striving for a righteousness produced (1) by the Spirit, (2) through faith and (3) for the glory of God alone.

We are going to talk about that a bit in our next two sessions.

- Failure to allow ourselves to be REALLY trained in righteousness.

Righteousness is not a one-time act. If we are not training / disciplining / exercising ourselves toward godliness and righteousness, the flesh will win the battle for our emotions, desires, and will.

We are being trained toward something at all times. Ephesians 4:22 says we are to “lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit.” It is a constant, ongoing battle—the flesh warring against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh (Gal. 6:8).

This is why it is so important that we discipline our minds and lives to think on things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of a good report—if we don’t we will allow our minds to be trained toward thinking the opposite (Phil. 4:8). We must recognize the same thing is true with our behavior (which flows out of the meditations of our heart). So, we make plans, and practice righteousness with a view toward establishing long-term, well-disciplined patterns of thought/action.

Now, notice as we wrap up our explanation of Paul's statement here about the power and sufficiency of God's Word for transformation...

...he says that the training and transformation to right living, can and SHOULD be a totally new manner of life.

... *useful for teaching, conviction, correction, training in righteousness, ...*

2 Timothy 3:17 — 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Adequate (ESV Complete)

- John Murray – There is no situation in which we [as men of God] are placed, no demand that arises for which Scripture as the deposit of the manifold wisdom of God is not adequate and sufficient.
- Definition – *artios* – capable, fitted, complete, proficient, qualified, perfectly fit – Arndt & Gingrich – able to meet all demands for the task.
- That means that the solution for our fears, our anxieties, our despair, our temptations and desires—they are all met by the truth and application of the sacred Scripture.
- The Scriptures perfectly fit us out for our task of loving God and our neighbor—fulfilling the purpose and goal of life in and under God.

The Bible EQUIPS us to live life to the glory and honor of God!

Equipped

- This is a more intensive and expressive term – it means to thoroughly equip for a task, for something to be completely furnished for its purpose.
- It is used of ships, fully outfitted with supplies to handle every foreseeable contingency while on the open sea.
- Our omniscient God perfectly knows every possible circumstance, difficulty, decision, responsibility and task that He has called us to—and, therefore, equips us to handle each and every one, by His grace, through the application of His Word to our hearts and lives, by His Spirit.

Conclusion and Implications

Those who deny that scripture is sufficient for all matters that pertain to life and godliness must deny, discredit, or explain away a significant inventory of biblical truths.

Rather than look at how **difficult** it is to understand life and all of its complex problems, and let the complexity of that be a cause or excuse for neglecting Scripture (maybe even denigrating it, or minimizing its importance)...

...we should instead desire to **apply** ourselves all the more to the study of the sufficient Scripture, so that we can understand how desires to TRANSFORM us in the midst of our very real problems.