

The Bible is Enough

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning everyone. My name's Steve. I haven't met you before. I'm the senior pastor here at St Paul's. If you have just jumped in for the first time, we are just partway through a series in understanding the Bible, growing confidence in the Bible in order that we might grow in confidence in the God who is the God of the Bible.

That's where we're up to right now. I'm going to pray that God might speak this morning, even as I struggle to. Gracious God, we are grateful that we have this enormous privilege because of the shoulders that we stand on this morning of those who have preserved for us your word so that it might in fact be in our laps in languages that we can understand.

Primarily, Lord, so that we might know you. And so even as we engage with it now and even in my weakness, I pray that you would be clear and you would be strong and that your word would come across as authoritative to us and that the result would be a greater and greater glimpse of your magnificence and your glory and also a glimpse of our deep, deep need for you.

And we ask it for your sake. Amen. So have you ever wondered if the Bible is really able to help you in your deepest problems?

Have you struggled to know what to do with your life and wish that you had had, you know, some special word from God, clear word from God, special communication to tell you this is what you should do here?

[1 : 5 1] Have you thought to yourself that as you look at the Bible and particularly the Bible's teaching on things like sexuality, it kind of needs to be updated, there needs to be a revised version for the new modern era?

Have you ever wished for a more direct and even a more personal revelation than what you might get from slowly and consistently reading the Bible?

Have you ever secretly wanted to add something to the Bible? You've read something in there and you go, hang on a bit, I wish Paul had just clarified what he meant by that.

A little bit of extra information on that issue. Have you ever secretly wanted to add something to the Bible just to make it in fact safer for your friends and family to read?

Have you ever wanted to take something away from the Bible so it doesn't offend your family and your friends? If you have answered yes to any of those questions, and if you haven't, let me tell you, you will at some point in your life, then you are struggling with what is known as the sufficiency of Scripture.

[3 : 0 9] It's not unusual for Christians to know something, if you like, about the attributes of God, you know, his justice, his mercy, so on and so forth.

On the other hand, what is not as commonly known amongst Christians are what are known as the attributes of Scripture, the attributes of the Bible. Protestant theologians generally highlight four essential characteristics of the Bible.

attributes of the Bible. They are doctrines of the Bible. The sufficiency of Scripture, the sufficiency, the clarity, the authority, and the necessity of Scripture.

Four of them. Sufficiency, clarity, authority, and necessity. Another way to put that is that God's Word is final. God's Word is understandable.

God's Word is necessary. And God's Word is enough, which is our topic for today. I'm starting at kind of the end and working our way back over the coming weeks.

[4 : 13] That's our topic today. And I've got three points in terms of our topic today in terms of the Bible is enough, the Bible's enough because Jesus is enough, and then finally we're going to land on how Jesus and the Bible together are enough.

So starting of all the Bible is enough. The sufficiency of Scripture means the Bible is clear enough to make us responsible for carrying out our present responsibilities to our Creator.

That is, this particular teaching is an ethical teaching. No one can say that God has not revealed himself enough in order to be saved or to live a life that is pleasing to him.

We don't need to add to it in any way in order to meet the challenges of the modern world, or in fact to take away from it so that it aligns better with the priorities of the modern world.

God's Word is perfect and it is complete, giving us all that we need to know about God, about Jesus, about salvation, and living a life that's aligned to God's purposes.

[5 : 32] If you want to specifically know what God's will is for your life, it is already in the Scriptures. And yet, this is the one attribute of all four, the one attribute of the Bible, that Bible-believing Christians are likely to forget the first.

It's the first one they're going to forget. The sufficiency of the Bible is the one attribute that is so quickly doubted or undermined by the average churchgoer.

It is possible, in fact, to say that all the right things about the Bible, it's possible to read it regularly, but when life gets tough, when life gets confusing, when life gets a little ho-hum, a little boring, we look for new words, new revelation, new experiences to bring us closer to God or to get a sense that God loves me.

We may not feel excited at all by the Bible's description of heaven, but we are mesmerized by the latest book written by someone who has died and said that they went there and have come back again and told us about it.

We are captivated by that, but not the Bible's description, God himself and what he says about heaven. We soak up stories of those who declare that they've received a special revelation from God, those who claim personal communication with God, those who attest to regular inward promptings.

[7 : 23] And we sit there and we go, if only I could have more of that. If only I could have that. Something a little more than the Bible. Then I would know that God really loves me.

But here's the issue. And we're going to unpack this for the rest of this message. The finality of Christ's redemption for us on the cross for our sin is intimately tied to the finality of God's revelation to us.

Intimately tied. Which leads me to my second point, that Jesus is enough. The big idea, and we're going to turn to Hebrews chapter 1 here, so grab up Hebrews chapter 1 in your Bibles.

The big idea in the first verses of Hebrews is in fact the big idea of the entire book of Hebrews. It's an introduction, which then gets, if you like, expanded upon through the rest of Hebrews.

And the big idea is that God has spoken by his son, and his son is superior to all persons, superior to all heavenly beings, superior to all institutions, superior to all rituals, and any other means of revelation and redemption.

[8 : 49] The first verses are here. In the first two verses, we have contrasts. In the past, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at various times and in various ways, but in these last days, he has spoken to us by his son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he also made the universe.

So those two verses, we have four contrasts. We have contrasts in eras, recipients, agents, and the way of God's revelation. And all four contrasts are meant to lead us to the same conclusion.

And that conclusion is decisively spelled out in verses two to four. And that conclusion is that Jesus Christ is the superior and the final agent of God's redemption and revelation.

The writer of Hebrews draws on Psalm 2 and Psalm 110 and makes seven affirmations to that end in verses two to four.

The son is the heir of all things, the creator of all things. He's the sustainer of all things. The son is the revelation of God. The son made purification for our sins.

[10 : 05] It says there, the son sat down. And let me just slow down on that one a little bit because it's like, what do you mean by the son sat down?

Just as a parent might sit down at the end of the evening because the kids are in bed, the dishwasher's on. And you go, today my work is done.

That's what it means he sat down. The work is done. He's enthroned on high. The work of revelation and the work of redemption is finalized and complete. He sat down.

The task for sacrifice for sin was complete in his death on the cross. He is permanently enthroned. And the seventh is in verse four.

The son therefore has become much superior to the angels. The whole theme of Hebrews is that Jesus Christ is the superior and final agent of God's redemption and revelation.

[11 : 07] Chapters one and two, he's superior to the angels. Chapter three, superior to Moses. Chapter four, sorry, chapters three and four, superior to Joshua. Chapter five, superior to Abraham.

Chapter six, sorry, Aaron. Chapter six is Abraham. Chapter seven is Melchizedek. Chapter eight is the old covenant. Chapter nine is the temple, the tabernacle. Jesus is superior to the high priest in chapter 10.

He is the, he's superior to all the treasures of this world in chapter 11. He is superior to God's revelation of the Old Testament law and Mount Sinai in chapter 12 as the gathering point of God's people.

And he is superior to any city and any place in this world that we might call home in chapter 13. Every single chapter. is about the superiority of Jesus Christ as the final revelation of redemption and revelation of God.

He surpasses all others because in him we have the fullness and the finality of God's redemption and revelation. Jesus is enough because he is superior and the final agent of God's redemption and revelation.

[12 : 29] And so the question you might now have is what has that got to do with the sufficiency of scripture? And I'm so glad you asked that question. I'm so glad I've got a third point.

Prior, you know, prepared and ready for this point. Jesus with the Bible are enough. Or Jesus and the Bible are enough.

A moment ago, I said, Jesus Christ surpasses all others because in him we have the fullness and the finality of God's redemption and revelation.

In many cases, Christians understand the concept of fullness. Jesus is the fulfiller of all the Old Testament prophecies and promises.

He's the fulfiller of the law. We understand that concept. Everything in the Old Testament is pointing to Jesus. He has completed all of its intention and purpose.

[13 : 32] The bit that we're often not so clear on is the bit where I said finality. The finality of Jesus' work. And we attach the idea of the finality of Jesus' work, we understand that in terms of redemption.

But we don't connect it to revelation often. We struggle with the sufficiency of scripture. The finality of his work was that he once for all paid for all sin.

He came to earth, he lived amongst us, he died on a Roman cross and cried out in his dying moments, it is finished.

We're not waiting for another king to rule over us or another prophet to give us some more information or a further priest to deal with our sin.

The work of redemption is complete. And what the book of Hebrews says, in fact, what I declare is the New Testament and the Old Testament as well, you cannot separate redemption from revelation.

[14 : 49] They're inseparable. Both are finished and finally fulfilled in Jesus. While the written word of God, the Bible, which we have in front of us, and the word of God made flesh, the incarnate word of God, Jesus Christ, are distinct, they are also inseparable.

every single act of redemption in the Bible, from the exodus out of Egypt to the return from exile in Babylon to the cross itself is an act of revelation, not just an act of redemption.

They tell us something about the nature of sin, the way of salvation, and the character of God. Likewise, the point of all revelation is to redeem.

That's the point of it, to redeem sinful people to God. All the words of the prophets, all the words of the law, all the words of the apostles are not to make us smart, but to get us saved and into the likeness of Jesus in his character and his priority.

In other words, redemption reveals and revelation redeems. They're inseparable. Jesus is God's full and final act of redemption and God's full and final revelation of himself.

[16 : 38] As John Frame has written, nothing can be added to his redemptive work and nothing can be added to his revelation of that redemptive work. Therefore, and I think this is more of an unknowing issue in that we doctrinally stumble into error.

If we say revelation is not complete, we probably are not aware that what we are automatically doing is we're saying that redemption is not complete.

One follows the other. If we say there is more that God needs to say to me, we're saying there is more that God needs to do for me.

That's what we're saying. Now, I'm not saying that God no longer speaks, but we must be very careful to understand how God speaks now.

God still speaks through his son, Jesus Christ. Jesus still works through his finished revelation. And God keeps speaking through what he has already said.

[18 : 02] That is how he speaks. Hebrews 4 tells us, sorry, 412 tells us the word of God is alive and active. And in chapter 3 verse 7, we are told that when the scriptures are read, the Holy Spirit speaks.

God continues to communicate with us personally and directly. But this ongoing communication is never, it is never ongoing revelation.

revelation. It is never ongoing revelation. It is never new information. The Holy Spirit no longer reveals new doctrines, but as we are told in John's gospel, he takes everything from Christ and impresses it upon our hearts.

In fact, it is only because the Bible is in fact final and complete revelation of God. It is only because it is complete that we can actually have right now a dynamic where God continues to speak to us.

The great Anglican 18th century preacher George Whitfield was one of the greatest orators in the history of the world, still regarded to this day.

[19 : 34] Phenomenal voice. Benjamin Franklin, having heard him preach, didn't believe all the rhetoric about George Whitfield, about him being able to speak to hundreds of people.

He did his own calculations at an event where Whitfield was preaching and calculated in actual fact this guy can speak with his own natural voice to 30,000 people. Purely a gift from God.

But George and his wife had trouble with having children, had many miscarriages and they ended up having one child and he named him John.

After John the Baptist and at one of these crowds, gatherings, when his new infant son was born, one of these gatherings, thousands of people, he publicly declared that God had told him to name him John because he was going to grow up to be a great preacher.

Their only child John died at four months of age. And in the depths of his grief, he had realised that he had taken a good and natural feeling in his heart and something that he wanted for his child and he deified it.

[21 : 08] He made it, God impressed this on me. He thought it was God telling him something rather than the longing of his heart. Now I'm not saying from that, and he actually had to publicly confess it, I'm not saying that God cannot lead you through your feelings or through impressions or impulses, but what I am saying is you can never make a decision on it.

Because you can never be sure. And that's why I say that churches who have value systems that say we are spirit led and Bible guided, second point, separate those points, are theologically in error.

Because the spirit works through the word, the final word of God. And even in that moment, if you are certain that this is God leading you, you will still have experiences like George Whitefield, the Bible is enough.

That's the sufficiency of scripture, it is enough. And we should see it as enough. Realistically, it is enough. If you're going to have a personal relationship with someone, you have to have words that you know are actually from that someone.

You know, you've ever had the issue online where you're communicating with someone and you're, hang on a bit, am I actually communicating with the person I think I'm communicating from? You know, I've received emails from people that I know, good friends at the top, in fact, I've received one this morning.

[23 : 08] This guy I know from history, bang, here's an email from him, but it happens to be my junk box. Is it truly him? Turns out it's not.

To have an ongoing personal, you need words that correspond with that person, certainty. There are moments where Nat and I look at each other and we are wordlessly adoring each other.

I think that's what's going on. No, it happens. And the only reason that is the case is because we've got 27 years of talking to each other.

You would not have that confidence at all in the relationship if you just got married and they never spoke. Never have confidence in the relationship.

If we had spent 27 years just staring at each other, I'm pretty sure we would still not be together. you need actual words that you are confident are coming from the person in order to build a dynamic of relationship.

[24 : 29] The very first dynamic of personal relationship with God is the acceptance of the fullness and the finality of the Bible. every single word is a word from God to you.

Every word. But that's not all. Because when we trust the Bible like that, it's not just a book of true facts about God, like the Guinness Book of Records is a book of facts.

It's not personal in any way. Have a look at Hebrews 4 verses 12 and 13. For the word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword.

It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and the attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight.

Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. It's telling us here, that God's word is alive and active.

[25 : 34] It's dynamic. It is personal. It's personal. Because when God speaks, action happens. His word is active. When he commands light for there to be light, light is the consequence.

That is, his word is his action. If I commanded in a dark room, let there be light, I've then got to put action to my word.

I've got to go and flick a light switch or put a bulb in or something to make light happen. For God, his word is his deed. Which means you cannot have God actively working in your life without his word.

His word is his power. His power operates through his word. His word is how his power operates in our lives. Every single word is personal, dynamic, penetrating, just like a surgeon's scalpel.

Bible. I remember a few years ago now preparing a sermon. And the topic I was dealing with on that day was looking at respectable sins and the particular topic was judgmentalism that I was preaching on.

[27 : 05] And so I'm writing this sermon and reading the text. text. And as I'm doing that, a name kept popping into my head.

And I'm getting out of there. Trying to write a sermon here. Name keeps popping in my head. And that particular person was a person that I considered had sinned against me in this particular way.

And then all of a sudden, as I'm thinking about them, and I hope they're going to be there on this Sunday, or that they listen to this, or somehow get it in their lap, all of a sudden the scalpel fell.

And it wasn't about them, it was actually about me. And the word of God convicted me in quite a deep way. that I was doing the very thing to them that I was considering they were doing to me.

I saw the log in my own eye through the work of the Spirit and comparison to the speck that was in theirs.

[28 : 24] It led to repentance, it led to me contacting that individual and apologising, and led to gratitude as I reflected on Jesus, was the one who in fact had been judged and condemned by me for me, so that there is no now, no any longer, any condemnation, no longer any judgement from God towards me.

the word of God speaks immediately, it speaks penetratingly, it speaks personally, is what it does. That's the dynamic of a personal relationship.

And for this dynamic to happen in our lives, we need to accept it as the final, the full and final revelation of God, and we need to accept the bad news that God has to give us.

Not just the good news, the word of God has the power to show us things that we don't want to see or accept in our lives at all. No one wants to hear how self-absorbed they are.

Most of us think that we're really good people, but the Bible will wipe us flat on that point. We don't want to hear that. In fact, think about your own life.

[29 : 54] Think about my life. Any personal relationship that has ever been of any value to me or you is one where the other person has had the power to confront us. Any personal relationship.

If we leave out of the Bible things that we don't like, how will God ever tell us something that we don't like to hear for our own good? Every single one of my closest friends, every single one of them, has offended me at some point.

Every spouse I've had has offended me at some point. That's only one, by the way, in case you were... What did he say it like that for?

Only as we see the whole Bible as enough can this happen. However, it is only as we see the Bible as enough that we accept it fully, we'll be able to accept the great things that he wants to tell us.

Until we accept the hard things, we will not be able to accept the great things. 1 John 3, 20, if our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

[31 : 18] What words of comfort is there? We don't want to believe what the Bible says about how bad we are, and therefore we will never understand or believe what the Bible says about how much we are loved and affirmed by God.

And unless we are willing to let the Bible tell us things about our sin that we don't want to hear, how will the Bible ever come in and tell us that we are more loved than we could possibly imagine.

The Bible alone, with the work of the Spirit, is enough for a dynamic, personal, penetrating relationship with Jesus Christ, if we accept it as fully, full and final.

Now, some of us might be sitting here and going, Steve, I've read the Bible and I've never had what you've just described.

Some others know what I'm talking about in what I've just said, but it's been quite a while since you've had that kind of dynamic.

[32 : 35] dynamic. The answer to both, getting it or getting it back, is not so much getting your doctrine of the Bible straight.

That's not really. Don't study so much the attributes of Scripture. You study the attributes of God, is how you get it back. get your doctrine of Jesus Christ right, which is why I spent the most of this talk on the Bible about the finality of Christ's revelation and redemption.

The Bible is not some magical thing that if I start reading it, then I'm automatically going to experience God's love. To experience God's love, we have to understand the main message of the Bible.

Not just the facts of the Bible, not just the details, not just the scope of where the bits fit. You need to know the main message of the Bible, which is fundamentally the gospel.

The main message is that the reason the Bible is God's final word is because Jesus Christ is unsurpassable.

[33 : 57] He is supreme in beauty and majesty. Supreme in beauty and majesty because of who he is and what he has done.

He is the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of his being. He is God's glory in human form. God's God's glory in God's glory in the world.

He is the God's glory in the world. He is the glory in the world. Only as we see this God taking everything that we deserve, do we see his beauty and the Bible becomes a living power in our lives.

Only as we see again and again and again and again that the perfect one, the one with unsurpassable radiance, was pierced for us.

Only then as we see that again and again and again that he was pierced for us, will his word ultimately pierce our hearts.

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datas Luke notices that we see that what all