

The Use of Scripture (2LCF 1.8-1.10)

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[0:00] In the evenings, we've been working through a series topically, and the topics being the heads of doctrine as they're, according to how they're contained in the Second London Confession of Faith.

And we believe that the Second London Confession of Faith accurately summarizes what is in Scripture, and so it's taking what we believe Scripture says and summarizing it systematically according to the heads of doctrine.

So this topical series, the topic is as it is in the Confession, so we will be referencing at some point to how it is articulated in the Confession.

Now, when the Confession was articulated, much of it was actually taken from the Westminster Confession of Faith, and it was at a time that was in response to what was going on in the Reformation, and a lot of it was a response to the ideas and concepts coming out of Rome, and so there's a polemical aspect to it in correcting false doctrine with what is true doctrine.

So a lot of how the doctrine of Scripture was articulated at the time, it was very specifically worded to correct some false ideas and to articulate very concisely and helpfully what true doctrine is.

[1:22] So we've looked at what we call the necessity of Scripture, a definition of Scripture, what is Scripture and what is not Scripture, the authority of Scripture, the perfection of Scripture, and this evening we will consider the use, the use of Scripture.

Now, I mentioned the Reformation, and we've been using the Reformation to help us kind of understand why things are worded the way they are and some false ideas that were being taught, that were being refuted, and a lot of it involved Martin Luther, and Martin Luther's theses, or his posting his theses against the ideas of Rome and the responses that Rome had against Martin Luther.

And Rome's response against Martin Luther was, and this first wave, there's different waves of the Reformation, the first wave was what we've been learning about Martin Luther, but Rome's response to the first wave of the Reformation included asserting that interpretation of the Bible can only be done through Rome, and that to attempt to interpret the Bible outside of Rome was essentially unlawful.

So interpretation is a big and important topic because it's how we understand what Scripture says. But Rome's response was that interpretation could only be done through Rome, and that the Pope had infallible interpretation.

And also, they stated that unauthorized translation into the common language was prohibited. So if you were English-speaking and there was not an English translation, the translation of it into the language that you speak and can understand was prohibited, because Rome did not want people to be able to know what Scripture says, because only what was coming out of Rome was lawful.

[3:26] So what are we then to make of these assertions coming out of Rome about the Bible and their assertions of only the Pope, or of the Pope having infallible interpretation?

I want to start by reading 2 Peter 1, verses 19 to 21. And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

Lord, we thank you for your word, for supernatural revelation, and that your word is the inspired, infallible, inerrant word of God. And we pray that as we seek to sit under the ministry of your word, that we pray, Holy Spirit, that you would illuminate your word to us and enable us to have a right knowledge and understanding of your word.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So this evening we will see that the unfolding of Scripture gives light and imparts understanding.

So in response to that first question that I posed, I have, by implication, given the answer. But the unfolding of Scripture gives light and imparts understanding.

[5:02] So first of all, we'll consider the transmission of Scripture. Second of all, the interpretation of Scripture. And third of all, the supremacy of Scripture.

And in the Confession, the paragraphs, chapter 1, paragraphs 8, 9, and 10, respectively, speak of those things. So paragraph 8 speaks of the transmission of Scripture.

So to understand really what that means, what's being communicated, because this was written a long time ago, and it was very specifically articulated, and it has stood the test of time.

And that's for a reason. And when we live in an era where truth is considered to be relative and interpretation dependent on the reader, it's important to look back and see what has been considered as true throughout the ages, and what has stood the test of time.

So the transmission of Scripture. We looked at the authority of Scripture, but there's a lot of... Since the Reformation, there has been a lot of translations.

[6:12] There's been a lot of versions. There's now many different versions of the English language. So not only has it been translated to English, but there's many different versions of it in English.

And some of them... There's some differences. There's some differences. Or what if somebody was to go where there is no Bible, and they were to learn the language there, and they were to translate the Bible into that language, but they don't yet have a very good understanding of the language, and they make errors.

So considering the point of the authority of Scripture, what exactly has authority over the church? Or which ones, which copies of Scripture are authoritative?

So first of all, the authority of originals, the same question can be asked, what is inspired? If we all had a different version or a different translation, are they all inspired?

Which is inspired? How do we know what's inspired? Because we might open the message. Which is that inspired? Or the Jehovah's Witness interpretation of a Bible, is that inspired?

[7:21] So what exactly is inspired? To understand where the authority is, the authority comes from the author, and the author being the inspiration of Scripture. So which copies are inspired?

Which ones are authoritative? Are all inspired, inerrant, and authoritative? If learning a new language, and you didn't quite grasp it, and the word for hunger and angry sounded the exact same, and you got it wrong, and you put, you know, you wrote down angry when it's supposed to be hungry, or the other way around, is that inspired?

Is that authoritative? And there are many times where somebody's learning a language, and then the more they learn it, they have to go back and make edits, because they got it wrong. So the question then is, what is inspired?

And from what is inspired, we get the authority. Similarly, I mentioned Jehovah's Witnesses.

Jehovah's Witnesses have a translation, or a version of the Bible, that it's specifically worded to accommodate their heretical views on the Trinity, and on the deity of Christ.

But they call that a Bible, so is that authoritative? Is that inspired? So we need to understand, what is authoritative? And the authority comes from that which is inspired, and translations aren't inspired.

[8:49] What's inspired? Because, for example, if somebody's learning the language, and they translate the Bible, and they make errors, they are not inspired. It's not inspired errors.

So what's inspired is the original copies. What the apostles wrote down to be copied and circulated, those originals are the inspired copies, and are authoritative.

Now the problem is, is that things break down over time, and that was, you know, a couple thousand years ago. So we don't have the originals. Now the originals were to be circulated, so the originals copies were made of them, and then copies were made of those copies, and then copies of those copies, but there wasn't photocopiers back then.

It was done by hand. So errors were made, and sometimes errors were smoothed out, and differences were made. And in the Greek and Hebrew languages, there's many copies.

But the originals, only the originals, are inspired and inerrant. And of the copies of those made, scribes, by hand, would make copies, and then copies of the copies to be circulated, to be

distributed.

[9:59] So there's many copies being made. The originals are the only inspired and inerrant. So, then the question is to say, how accurate does this version materially to the original?

But we don't have the originals, so it's through, really a critical process of manuscripts. But, the question is, is it materially the same?

Because our English Bible are English words, not Greek words. So the words are not the exact same as the English, or as the Greek translation, but is it materially the same?

Is it faithful to the originals? And so far as it is faithful to the originals, it is the word of God. So the transmission of Scripture with the authority, from the authority coming from the originals, and then we see the duty of translation.

The duty of translating it from the Greek language, because most people in the church don't speak Greek or don't speak Hebrew, nor can they read it. So, should, should the Bible be made available so that people can read and know God's Word?

[11:15] Can lay people and even an uneducated plowboy, could lay people and even an educated plowboy have access to the Bible and be able to read it and to be able to understand it?

Now, William Tyndale, during the Reformation, William Tyndale committed a crime, and that crime was an unauthorized translation of the Bible from the Greek and Hebrew into the English language. And he wrote, If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that drives the plow to know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.

And this has been a time where unauthorized translation of the Bible into common language was prohibited and that any attempt to interpret the Bible was, could only be done through Rome.

And William Tyndale was laboring to be able to take the Bible, translate it into the common language of the people and so that everybody, even the plowboy, could know the Word of God.

[12:24] So he translated the Bible for the people, in other words, into English, so that the people could have access to the words of God.

Or as the older wording might be the vulgar language, so when you see that in the Confession, the vulgar language, that means, or the common language. From the Greek, so he translated it from the Greek and Hebrew so that even English, the English-speaking plowboy could find God's voice in it.

And this was considered to be unauthorized by Rome. Rome did not authorize this translating of Scripture and he was persecuted for it. And actually, eventually, Tyndale was betrayed by a friend for a bounty.

And in 1536, Tyndale was tied to a stake to be burned to death. And he prayed, Lord, open the eyes of England, sorry, open the King of England's eyes.

And when he prayed this, the executioner, there was a rope around his neck, the executioner pulled the rope so tight that he strangled to death before his body was even consumed by the flame. So his last words, Tyndale's last words in being persecuted to translate, illegally translate God's word into the English language so that people could have access to it and hear it in their own language.

[13:50] His last words in dying for it as a martyr was that the Lord would open the King's eyes, open the King of England's eyes. Actually, three years later, without going into details, three years later, King Henry VIII, he ordered printers and sellers to provide free use of the Bible in English and he ordered them to be placed in every church for public reading.

Now that we have many translations from Greek and Hebrew and it was translated into Latin and then into common languages, now that we have many translations, we who speak English, we have English copies, English translations of the Bible, of God's word.

And there are many translations of God's word and people, different people who all speak English come to different conclusions when they read the English translations of the Bible.

So what do we make of this? What do we make of the fact that even if we take the same one, the New King James Version, which is what I'm reading today, if many different people read that and they come to different conclusions, well, what do we make of that?

What do we do with that? So that brings us to the next point, the interpretation of Scripture. So with the use of Scripture, there's the transmission of it and the duty to translate it into common language and now the interpretation of Scripture.

[15:19] So, how then do we achieve a sufficient understanding of Scripture? Remember, that was the question I ended last Lord's Day evening with.

how then do we achieve a sufficient understanding of Scripture? And in Psalm 119, 130, it says, the unfolding of your words gives light. It imparts understanding to the simple.

So that word unfolding, unfolding requires proper hermeneutics. Maybe you hear that word and you're saying, Herman who? But hermeneutics is the art and science of interpreting Scripture. And it teaches us, hermeneutics teaches us the principles, laws, and methods of interpretation. And in paragraph 9, we see a very important rule to help us in the interpretation of Scripture.

And those who would try to have a biblicist approach where they want to make an argument so they find a verse in the Bible and they wrench it out of its context and they use it for their arguments outside of the unity and harmony of all of Scripture, we see an error with that approach because what's required to understand what the text says is a proper hermeneutic, a proper method of interpretation which teaches us the principles, laws, and methods of interpretation.

[16 : 52] So first of all, everybody's going to interpret the Bible in some way. When you read it, you are going to interpret it in some way. And maybe you bring in some sort of presupposition or an idea that's already in your mind when you come to it.

Maybe it's a good one, maybe it's a bad one. But you are going to interpret it in some way. And there are many different methods which people employ to come to their conclusions of Scripture. Some of them are right and some of them are wrong. And in the Confession, it outlines what Scripture gives us as an infallible interpreter of Scripture.

And that's called the analogy of Scripture or the rule of Scripture. Notice in paragraph 9 of chapter 1 it says, the infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself.

And therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture, remember that, the true and full sense, not just taking one Scripture out of its context, but all of Scripture, the true and full sense, and that's the analogy of faith, a true and full sense of any Scripture which is not manifold, but one, one sense of Scripture, it must be searched by other places that speak more clearly.

[18 : 13] Now, if you recall, we talked about the perspicuity of Scripture, and that word means the clarity of Scripture, but not all passages are alike clear. Some of them are clear didactic teaching, some of them are not.

But what is not clear, remember, it is divine revelation. God has revealed it to us for a reason, and perhaps that it is not as clear as to cause us to slow down and really chew on it and to look through other parts of Scripture, perhaps the Old Testament, to better and more fully understand and appreciate what is being said here.

So, when we come to a text that doesn't seem quite so clear to us, or perhaps there's a dispute on what the meaning of it is, then we refer to the other parts of Scripture that are more clear as it pertains to the same subject and event.

And this is called the analogy of Scripture or the rule of Scripture. And then we also see in here, with helping us to understand how to rightly interpret Scripture, is the analogy of faith, where it says that when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture, which is not manifold, but one, it must be searched by other places that speak more clearly.

And the analogy of faith, which is a rule for our interpretation, is the use of the general sense of the meaning of Scripture. In other words, presupposing a sense of the theological meaning of Scripture, understood in light of the theological whole, what all of Scripture says.

[19 : 49] So, in other words, we don't want to just take a text, a verse, out of its context and think that that in itself speaks clearly on a subject, because things can be easily taken out of context that way, and that's what heretics do, and that's what Arius did, is pointing to a verse of Scripture, but wrenched out of the context of the theological whole of Scripture.

So, Scripture interprets Scripture in light of the theological whole of all of Scripture. Paul Schaeffer wrote, The interpreter never stands alone, but rather embraces a Trinitarian and redemptive reading as the matrix in which sound understanding arises.

Now, as I said, some sort of method, some sort of law, some sort of rule is going to be used in interpreting Scripture. There are different ones. Some of them are right.

Some of them are wrong. We want to get the right ones, and Scripture gives us infallible interpretation of Scripture.

So, if we're going to use a method of interpretation, we might as well use the best ones, and the best ones is the one that Scripture itself uses. So, next, we see the single sense.

[21:08] The question is about the true and full sense of any Scripture which is not manifold, but one. So, the single sense. Are there multiple valid interpretations of Scripture?

Maybe sometimes you might have been at a small group study where they ask, what does this mean to you, or what does this mean to you, as though just the intuition of the reader is in itself a valid interpretation.

but the Bible, the Bible doesn't mean what it means based on how we perceive it. The Bible means what it means based on the divine author's intent.

And we see in 2 Peter 1, 21, is that all of Scripture has the Holy Spirit as the divine author. For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

inspiration means God breathed. All of Scripture is God breathed, is inspired by God. So, what we want to understand is not my intuition when I read it, but the authors, the divine author's intent.

[22:20] The very one who inspired the Word of God. Now, Cyril of Alexandria, looking back in the early church fathers, he wrote that the entire Scripture is one book and was spoken by one Holy Spirit.

And then when we look at other of the church fathers and what they thought, we see a connection and that men such as Athanasius, Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria, they all assume that individual passages are to be read not on their own, but that they are to be read in light of the story that gives meaning to the whole.

And that's one of the benefits of having a covenantal framework when we read Scripture is seeing the unity of all of Scripture and to see how everything fits in to that one story, which, if you're here this morning, you remember how all of the Old Testament promises the coming Messiah and the New Testament testifies that the Messiah has come and that is Jesus Christ.

The Bible begins, this single sense of Scripture, it begins at creation and it ends in a vision of a new, more splendid city in which the Lord God will be their light.

Again, the Old Testament promises the Messiah, the New Testament testifies that He has come. And the church fathers, in the early church, the church fathers understood that the plain sense of the word.

[23:52] So, what that means, the plain sense of the word is the literal, grammatical, historical meaning of the text. So, that might be in the Psalms of David, David's persecution from his enemies.

So, what's going on here is that the church fathers understood that that plain sense of the word is because there's some hermeneutics, some methods of interpretation that say it strictly is only the grammatical, historical, literal reading of the text and we can't take any other reading out of that. But the early church fathers, sorry for the repetition, the early church fathers understood that the plain sense of the words of the Bible did not exhaust their meaning. That there's more meaning intended than the human authors understood or may have intended because there's the human authors who penned the book such as Moses or David or Nehemiah and there's the historical, literal, grammatical meaning but there's the sense of all of Scripture from beginning to end of one story and one sense.

Now, one sense doesn't mean it's limited to just the human authors because all of the human authors remember are moved along by the Holy Spirit or inspired by the Spirit of God so the divine authorship of the Bible is the Holy Spirit and the intent or the sense that we want to understand is not just the human author but also the divine author's intent when we understand it in light of the theological whole of all of Scripture.

There's many examples that we could look at if we were to take the Psalms we would be here till next month at least. Throughout the Psalms it speaks of Christ.

[25:57] An example that's very easy to choose is Psalm 22 among others. Psalm 22 is a psalm of Christ's passion but yet Christ is not referenced in Psalm 22.

We know this because it's referenced referred to later on as referring to Christ's resurrection. So if we were to read just Psalm 22 we wouldn't we might not necessarily know that but when we read in the New Testament we see that there's more than just the intent of the human author.

Another example is Acts 2.31 refers to Psalm 16 to being about Christ's resurrection but when you read Psalm 16 it doesn't say it's about Christ's resurrection but we have infallible divine interpretation in the New Testament interpreting the Old Testament as being about Christ and

Psalm 16 about being of the resurrection of Christ.

So what we have then is apostolic interpretation inspired by the Holy Spirit an infallible interpretation in the Word of God.

And again when you read the Bible you will use some method of interpretation you might as well use the best one and the best one is the one that the Bible itself gives.

[27 : 23] Now there was in the medieval era there was what's called the quadriga which was the what they said was the fourfold sense of scripture and there is a lot of good to it but basically it was that in any text of scripture there's a fourfold sense to it.

The first is the literal the grammatical historical meaning of it the second would be the allegorical of how it typologically or points to Christ and the church and then there's the the the the tropological which is the underlying moral moral teaching under it and then finally the analogical which is the eschatological or end times so they saw this fourfold meaning to every text of scripture which at times would have brought out a forced interpretation of it but there's a lot there that I think we should learn from in that it's not just the literal historical grammatical intent or interpretation behind it and then coming out of the medieval era the reformed hermeneutics they did a lot of work to kind of help us understand typology and how the divine author's intent of the old testament typologically points to

Christ and the church now John Owen he wrote if the scripture has more than one meaning it has no meaning at all that one meaning isn't just a literal grammatical historical interpretation that one meaning or that one single sense is the full meaning the full sense of it in light of the theological whole of all of scripture which includes both the human author's intent of how it speaks of that historical narrative in time for example and also the divine author's intent and it pointing towards and promising the coming of Christ the coming of the Messiah now controversies of interpretation and meaning are going to arise not all interpretation comes through Rome so because it doesn't all come through Rome and because the Bible has been transmitted or translated into English then multiple different churches are going to interpret it and come up with meanings and there's going to be different interpretations different meanings they come up with and there's going to be controversies so what do we do with controversies controversies of interpretation and meaning are to be weighed against the single and full sense of scripture remember it's not that controversies of interpretation are to be weighed against a verse that you bring but against the single and full sense of scripture because you could take a verse take it out of context if you present it on its own isolated from the rest of scripture then you could use that as a springboard to teach against the trinity or to teach that the son is not eternally

God but when you understand the true and right context of that text in light of the true and full and single sense of all of scripture scripture does teach the doctrine of the trinity and scripture doesn't teach that there was a time when the son was not so it's not just with one verse wrenched out of context without looking at the theological whole of scripture but that controversies of interpretation and meaning are to be weighed against the single and full sense of scripture so that brings us to our third point which is what paragraph 10 teaches the supremacy of scripture the supremacy of scripture as the judge of controversies so the supreme judge I'll actually read and it articulates it well in its short so I'll read it in paragraph 10 the supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined and all decrees of counsels opinions of ancient writers doctrines of men and private spirits are to be examined and in whose sentence we are to rest can be no other but the holy scripture delivered by the spirit into which scripture so delivered our faith is finally resolved so when there are controversies that arise how do we settle the controversy what is the supreme judge of those controversies well scripture but then what if when both controversies both sides of the controversy are going to scripture or possibly even using the same text of scripture well then we then we employ the infallible interpretation that scripture gives us by interpreting the unclear passages of scripture with other passages that are more clear on the same subject and we interpret it in light of the theological whole of all of scripture you might find yourself in a situation where there's a controversy somebody has a different interpretation of what scripture this is and they say but that's just your interpretation as though either a every interpretation is valid because in this in this day and age truth is relative according to the the person or they might just be saying there's only one right interpretation of scripture but if if you're asserting your interpretation then you're saying that you're infallible so what do we do with that argument that's just your interpretation if you remember from last week that argument is actually arguing against the clarity of scripture and

then we see the interpretive the interpretive interpretive methods in order to rightly understand your scripture but the what's important to remember is that when controversies arise and a person uses that argument that's just your interpretation of scripture it's not just about one verse it's about the theological whole of all of scripture and it can be very difficult for one person like that biblicist who says just me and my bible and they have their verse for their ideas it would be very difficult for one person with every idea or conception that comes to mind to read through the entire bible and see what it says throughout all of scripture about that one idea or that one conviction and then the next time a question or idea comes up to have to read through the whole bible we formulate our conclusions on heads of doctrine it's not like you turn to the book on the trinity or it's not like you turn to the book on justification it's what all of scripture the theological whole of all of scripture says about it and that's what's so beneficial about having a confession that has stood the test of time is that it summarizes what all of scripture says in light of the theological whole of all of scripture in a helpful concise way now we see also that scripture is a test

a test for all the sources of controversy or all the sources of various interpretations and when we come to God's word we need to come to God's word believing that it has the answers for those that say well you know good men of God disagree so there's no hope for us understanding what scripture says but when we come to scripture we need to come to it knowing that God speaks through scripture and God has given us scripture which is sufficient for all that we need to know for faith and obedience so I mean we're not going to come to it to know how to change the blade on my lawnmower but in everything that we need to know for faith and obedience we need to come to God's word knowing that it is sufficient that it is clear and that the answers are contained in scripture sufficiently and clearly and authoritatively for saving faith and obedience so what are some concluding uses that we can take from the use of scripture first of all if you remember the unfolding of scripture in Psalm 119 130 the unfolding is to achieve a sufficient understanding of the whole counsel of God in holy scripture unfolding unfolding what scripture says in light of the single and full sense of scripture and that single and full sense of scripture is based on the unity of scripture of it all being about

[36:07] Christ about God reconciling sinful people to a holy God through a mediator and that being Jesus Christ to the full sense of scripture so that even helps us when we read something in the Old Testament that in that Old Testament it's not a way for people to merit a right standing with God by their obedience but that it's somehow pointing to Christ and if we don't understand why then there's other parts of scripture that will help us see that more clearly to help us to really contemplate on it and appreciate it and be in wonder at God his word how he reveals himself and his wondrous works so again unfolding in light of the single and full sense of scripture is very antithetical to the biblicist proof texting which wrenches a text of scripture out of its context out of the unity of scripture as though for the past 2000 years no one's actually ever read that verse to say here's my idea and here's my verse just the verse not rest of scripture to prove my idea as though presenting that idea it's like over the last 2000 years no one's read that verse or if they have read it then for the past 2000 years no one's rightly understood it until this biblicist finally came along and he alone finally has the true and right understanding of it so beware second of all of the error of modern individualism our culture is a culture established on individualism and that's crept into the church as the individual is the arbiter of their truth and that their truth is according to their feelings and that certainly has crept into the church and into methods of interpretation how the bible is used but ephesians 4 11 it says and he himself gave some to be apostles some prophets some evangelists and some pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry for the edifying of the body of christ till we all come to the unity of the faith so you see there is no place for individualism in the church where someone says just me and my bible when christ has given victory gifts of pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints!

for the! unity isn't sweeping our differences under the rug and pretending they're not there so that we can pretend like we're getting along unity is the more in which we agree upon of doctrine the more unity that we have till we all come to the unity of the faith remember what's faith knowledge assent and trust to be united in the knowledge that we have in our agreement of it that that is true and having confidence in the trustworthiness as it applies to me that my sins are forgiven in Christ and Christ's righteousness is accredited to me and I have been made right before God because of the work of Christ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a perfect man to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ that we should no longer be

children tossed to and fro carried about with every wind of doctrine what's implicit there is that those who are not being equipped and edified by

Christ's victory gifts! So the individual modern individualism that infects the Christian that says just me and my Bible is the one who is tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine So what is at stake? Does this really matter? If somebody is happy doing their own thing doing their own interpretation coming to their own conclusions and outside of what is orthodox does it really matter?

What is at stake here? What is at stake is the glory of God the salvation of man right living to God and living blessedly in this life and forever.

[40 : 39] Lord we thank you for your word and that we have divine testimony and that while there are the human authors that they were moved or carried along by the Holy Spirit and that there is the divine author through all of scripture we praise you Lord and that your word does not contradict itself and that you have given us in supernatural revelation all that we need to know for saving faith and obedience I pray that you would help us to rightly understand it and that as we grow in a deeper and fuller understanding of your word in light of the theological whole of all of scripture that we would learn to love it more and learn to love you more and that we as the church of the living God may grow as the pillar and ground of truth pray this in Jesus name amen