

Building by the Book, Pt 1: "God's Word is Enough"

2 Timothy 3:16 ESV 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** (KJV-"**perfect**"), equipped **for every good work**.

- I. We've been talking for several weeks about Christ's role as the foundation of the church. Meaning that he is the only one upon which the true church stands. Everything else is a flawed foundation which will eventually give way to the storms of life and the winds of changing culture. But not Christ. He has stood. He is standing. And rest assured, he will stand.
 - A. Last week we talked about how we are to build upon the foundation of Christ.
 1. Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 3 that every Christian is building on the foundation of Christ, either well or poorly; and he uses the analogy of building materials to show us how well we've built.
 - a) Gold, Silver and precious stones represent quality craftsmanship, while wood, hay, and straw represent shoddy craftsmanship.
 - b) He further reminds us that we will be held accountable on a coming day when our work will be tested, and its quality revealed, by fire.
 2. We also talked about 3 general categories that are necessary to building well: trusting fully in Christ's work, following Christ's example, and obeying Christ's teaching.
 - B. Today we want to introduce another "mini-series" in order to go one step deeper along these lines. We want to remind you of the one essential tool that is critical if you are to build well on the foundation of Christ.
 - C. This tool is the Holy Scriptures (the Bible, The Word of God). Our hope is that by the end of this series you'll understand its significance better, and have confidence in it like never before.
 1. Everything we talked about last week, how we trust Christ's redemptive work, follow his example and obey his teaching, is measured, not but our morality, our best intentions, or even the teaching of a given church, but rather by the Word of God.
 2. In one of the most famous scriptures in which the Word of God speaks of itself, it reveals its searching, measuring, and probing power.
 3. **Hebrews 4:12 ESV** 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.
 4. "Piercing" and "discerning" - it's interesting to me that when God chooses to describe the function of his word here, he doesn't speak of it's comforting or encouraging power, but it's usefulness in slicing us right down to our innermost being!
 - a) That, of course is not to say that there is no comfort or encouragement to be found in God's word. But God says it's a **sword**, but oftentimes I fear we only want to make it out to be a soft, warm blankie!

- b) That may sound harsh, but the Word of God operates in just such a manner because the transformation that you and I need (from hopeless sinners to triumphant saints), like it or not, requires surgery as opposed to just lullabies.
 - 5. But remember! The surgeons scalpel, though razor sharp, is meant to be an instrument of healing.
 - a) It is never wise to neglect it when it is necessary.
 - b) Nor should we ever wield it as a weapon against others.
 - 6. But that's only the half! There is so much more to understanding all of the Word's beautiful and vital operation in my life, I must also learn to love, appreciate and celebrate the Word, **simply because** it is the Father's word to me!
 - a) It is true that only through it's precise and beautiful cutting can you and I ever become what we truly want to be.
 - b) But it is also true that it is a **love letter** that is meant to enrapture my soul, and set my heart ablaze with love for God.
 - D. For example, in Psalm 119, the longest chapter in all of scripture, David spends 176 verses pouring out his soul in a glorious love poem written about scripture! Take a look at just three verses with me and ask yourself, "is this is how I cherish God's word?"
 - 1. **Psalm 119:47 ESV** for I **find my delight** in your commandments, **which I love**.
 - 2. **Psalm 119:72 ESV** The law of your mouth is **better to me** than thousands of gold and silver pieces.
 - 3. **Psalm 119:136 ESV** My eyes shed streams of tears, **because people do not keep your law**.
 - E. So this is where we will be camping for the next few weeks. If you're interested, we'll be borrowing heavily from Kevin DeYoung's book, "Taking God at His Word". If you'd like to purchase and read it, following along with us, it is a real simple read and available for about \$10 on Amazon.
- II. To begin, we are going to be talking about the 4 main attributes of Scripture over the next 4 weeks. You might be familiar with the various attributes of God: things like his holiness, justice, omnipresence, love, etc., but protestant theologians have traditionally highlighted four essential characteristics of God's Word. They are it's Sufficiency, Clarity, Authority, and Necessity. (You can remember those easier with the acronym SCAN.)
- A. Today we are going to unpack the truth of the sufficiency of scripture; simply put, this means that God's written Word is enough. In other words, the scriptures contain everything we need for knowledge of salvation and godly living. We don't need any new revelation from heaven.
 - 1. No one has a "just beef" with God to say that he hasn't told us enough to know him or to live in a fashion that pleases him.
 - 2. **2 Timothy 3:16 ESV** 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**.

- a) The words “complete” and “every good work” help us to see that God’s word is enough to cause us to become what God has intended that we become.
 - b) It is not necessary for us to somehow “beef up” God’s word in order to make it “relevant”, or to make it more palatable to modern sensitivities. God’s word is enough for every situation, in every generation, on every continent, and in every cultural or political context.
 - B. However sometimes, in practice, the sufficiency of scripture is a concept that normal church-going Christians don’t fully embrace!
 - 1. None of us would ever say it out loud, especially in decent, “god-fearing” company, but haven’t you ever struggled with whether God’s word was enough in the tough times of life?
 - 2. How about when it looks like it goes against everything science seems to be saying? Or when it flies in the face of commonly-held societal values?
 - C. In order to have a life in allegiance with God’s truth, we must fully believe in the sufficiency of God’s Word regardless of everything else that shifts and changes around us. “Let God be true though every man were a liar!” (Romans 3:4)
- III. In the book I mentioned earlier, Kevin DeYoung takes an interesting approach to biblically affirming the sufficiency of God’s word. He does so by looking toward the opening words of the book of Hebrews.
 - A. **Hebrews 1:1 ESV** Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, **2** but *in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son*, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. **3** He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, **4** having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.
 - B. DeYoung points out that this verse begins with a series of contrasts:
 - 1. A contrast of eras: “long ago” vs. “these last days”.
 - a) This doesn’t necessarily speak of the “end of the world”, it is emphasizing that because Jesus said “It is finished”, there is no act of redemption left to be accomplished.
 - b) Because the history of redemption is how God marks time, you and I are in the final era; smack dab in the center of the “last days”.
 - 2. A contrast of recipients of the word: “our fathers” (Old Covenant Jews) vs. “to us” (New Covenant Church)
 - a) In the past God revealed his covenant to a single nation, making them the custodians of his revelation. But now he has opened the gates of the kingdom unto “whosoever will”.
 - b) **Romans 1:16 ESV** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (or Gentile).
 - 3. A Contrast of agency: “the prophets” vs. “his son”.

- a) Previously everything God said to reveal his will, he said through people like Moses, Elijah, or Isaiah (among many others). His communication was indirect, done through a human agent.
- b) In Christ however, the human and divine spoke to us fully represented in the God-man, Jesus Christ in order to show what God was like, what his will was, and the path to experiencing his salvation.
- 4. A contrast of ways: God speaking in “many times and in many ways” vs. a single voice; that of his Son.
 - a) In the Old Testament God spoke by dreams, visions, voices, a burning bush, a talking donkey, and by writing on a wall, etc.
 - b) But now he has spoken everything he wants to say through his Son. Jesus is the only conduit of revelation from the Father.
- C. All of these contrasts lead to a glorious conclusion! Christ is the superior and final agent of God’s redemption and revelation. The writer of Hebrews makes 7 affirmations to this end:
 1. The Son is the heir of all things! Everything culminates in him, and one day all he has purchased by his work will be laid at his feet.
 2. The Son is the creator of all things! The word that was spoken to create the cosmos is now to be identified with the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us.
 3. The Son is the sustainer of all things! Everything from subatomic particles to vast Galaxies are upheld by the Word of the Son.
 4. The Son is the revelation of God! The writer shows us that the Son is not a reflection of God’s glory, but the radiance of it.
 5. The Son made purification for your sins! Jesus was the Lamb of God who took away the stain of sin, not temporarily or symbolically as the Old Testament sacrifices did, but once and for all, having cast all of our iniquity as far as the east is from the west.
 6. The Son sat down! Because His work was completely finished the Son has taken his throne, and shall remain enthroned forever and ever.
 7. The Son, therefore has become much superior to angels! Angels are God’s messengers, but Christ was God’s message. There will never be a different or superior message that will diminish in any way what he has said through Christ.
- D. So what does all this have to do with the sufficiency of scripture? As we just discovered, in Christ we have two things: the **fullness** and **finality** of God’s redemption and revelation.
 1. Many of us understand the **fullness** part of the equation fairly well.
 - a) This means that everything “long ago” was pointing to him, but has now been fulfilled in him.
 - b) He is the fulfillment of centuries of prediction, prophecies, types and shadows in the Old Testament.
 2. But what about the **finality** part of the equation?
 - a) In Christ, God has made himself clearly known.
 - (1) Christ told Phillip in John 14, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.”

- (2) **John 10:30 ESV** I and the Father are one.
- b) In Christ, all of our sins have been paid for once and for all.
 - c) Because of Jesus, we are not waiting for any prophet, priest, king or divine revelation to accomplish any further work of redemption. "It is finished!"
- E. Because of this truth, we must not separate finished and complete redemption from finished and complete revelation! Both were finished in Jesus!
- IV. So does this mean that God does not speak anymore? How can we be a church that affirms that the gifts of the Holy Spirit seen throughout the New Testament are still operating (which we are) if God is not still speaking?
- A. The question that we must answer is **how** does God speak in these last days? Hebrews tells us clearly that he speaks by his Son. The completeness of his revelation is in Jesus alone.
 - B. Therefore if someone is claiming to be speaking prophetically by the Spirit of God what things should we look for? And what should be the boundaries of the operation of that gift?
 1. First of all, if God is speaking, what they are saying will be glorifying to Jesus magnifying his lordship above everything else.
 - a) **1 Corinthians 12:3b ESV**...no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit.
 - b) This verse tells us that Christ-exalting praise is produced by the Holy Spirit inside us. The implication is that what is genuinely spoken by the Holy Spirit will be to his praise alone.
 - c) It will not glorify another, or distract in any way from the glorious redemptive purposes of God in Christ.
 2. Secondly, the redemptive purposes of Christ will be the central theme of any true prophetic voice.
 - a) This means that Christ's work alone will be what is pointed out, lifted up, and offered to the hearers through the true working of the Holy Spirit.
 - b) **John 14:26 ESV** But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and **bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.**
 - c) **John 14:26 ESV** "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, **he will bear witness about me.**
 - d) **John 16:14 ESV** He will **glorify me**, for he will **take what is mine** and declare it to you.
 3. Thirdly, the Holy Spirit will always operate in perfect harmony with the written word. Where that harmony does not exist, the Spirit is not speaking! If an alleged "manifestation" or "gift" in any way violates what God has stated in the Bible, it is false and must be repudiated.
 - a) **1 John 4:1 ESV** Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.
 - b) We are told expressly here to "test" or "judge" any spirit that speaks on behalf of God. In order to do so, we need a standard by which to judge.

- c) Our standard isn't some subjective "heebie jeebie" or emotional feeling, but rather the objective word of God.
- 4. Lastly, You will often hear someone say that have received a "new revelation".
 - a) That is OK as long as they don't mean it's "new" in the sense of something God has **only** spoken to them, but instead they mean it is new in the sense that they have never seen it before.
 - b) This means that any "new revelation" you think you've received must be rigorously tried and confirmed by the standard of the written word or it must be immediately and confidently discarded.
- V. The Bible that reveals that Jesus is more than enough for both redemption by God and revelation from him. In these last days God has spoken to us by his Son.
 - A. Never has a sweeter message been heard. It's melody and rhythm are all-satisfying. Because it is the song of the all-satisfying Son!
 - B. There is no need that I could possibly have of anything else! What God has said through the Son is enough to save me, transform me, recreate me, encourage me, discipline me, heal me, deliver me, enlighten me, and resurrect me.
 - 1. Jesus himself was sustained by God's word. Even when tempted in the wilderness by the devil, his reply was...
 - 2. **Matthew 4:4 ESV** But he answered, "It is written," "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."
 - C. And when John testified of him in the beginning of his Gospel, this is what he said...
 - D. **John 1:1 ESV** In the beginning was **the Word**, and **the Word** was with God, and **the Word** was God. **2** He was in the beginning with God...**14** And **the Word** became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.
 - 1. The theme of the Word is THE Word!
 - 2. And that is enough...God's Word is enough.