The Sufficiency of Scripture
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: DD11

A GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH DISTINCTIVE

It is significantthat one of the biblical names of Christ is Wonderful Counselor (Isa. 9:6). He is the highest and ultimate One to whom we may turn for counsel, and His Word is the well from which we may draw divine wisdom. What could be more wonderful than that? In fact, one of the most glorious aspects of Christ's perfect sufficiency is the wonderful counsel and great wisdom He supplies in our times of despair, confusion, fear, anxiety, and sorrow. He is the quintessential Counselor.

This is not to denigrate the importance of Christians counseling each other. There certainly is a crucial need for biblically sound counseling ministries within the Church, and this need is met by those who are spiritually gifted to offer encouragement, discernment, comfort, advice, compassion, and help to others. In fact, one of the very problems that has led to the current plague of bad counsel is that churches have not done as well as they could in equipping people with those kinds of gifts to minister effectively. In addition, the complexities of this modern age have made it more difficult to take the time necessary to listen well, serve others through compassionate personal involvement, and otherwise provide the close fellowship necessary for the church body to enjoy health and vitality.

Churches have looked to psychology to fill the gap, but it isn't going to work. Professional psychologists are no substitute for spiritually gifted people, and the counsel that psychology offers cannot replace biblical wisdom and divine power. Moreover, psychology tends to make people dependent on a therapist, whereas those exercising true spiritual gifts always turn people back to all-sufficient Savior and His all-sufficient Word.

A Psalm on Scripture's Sufficiency

Psalm 19:7–9 is the most monumental and concise statement on the sufficiency of Scripture ever made. Penned by David under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, these three verses offer unwavering testimony from God Himself about the sufficiency of His Word for every situation and thereby counter the teaching of those who believe that God's Word must be augmented with truth gleaned from modern psychology. In this passage David makes six statements, each highlighting a characteristic of Scripture and describing its effect in the life of the one who embraces it. Taken together, these statements paint a beautiful picture of the sufficiency of God's Word.

Scripture Is Perfect, Restoring the Soul

In the first statement (v. 7), David says, “The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul.” This word “perfect” is the translation of a common Hebrew word meaning “whole,” “complete,” or “sufficient.” It conveys the idea of something that is comprehensive, so as to cover all aspects of an issue. Scripture is comprehensive, embodying all that is necessary to one’s spiritual life. David’s implied contrast here is with the imperfect, insufficient, flawed reasoning of men.

God’s perfect law, David says, affects people by “restoring the soul” (v. 7). To paraphrase David’s words, Scripture is so powerful and comprehensive that it can convert or transform the entire person, changing someone into precisely the person God wants him to be. God’s Word is sufficient to restore through salvation even the most broken life—a fact to which David himself gave abundant testimony.

Professional psychologists are no substitute for spiritually gifted people, and the counsel that psychology offers cannot replace biblical wisdom and divine power.

Scripture Is Trustworthy, Imparting Wisdom

David further expands the sweep of scriptural sufficiency in Psalm 19:7, writing, “The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.” David’s use of the word “sure” means that the Lord’s testimony is unwavering, immovable, unmistakable, reliable, and worthy to be trusted. It provides a foundation on which to build one’s life and eternal destiny.

God’s sure Word makes the simple wise (v. 7). The Hebrew word translated “simple” comes from an expression meaning “an open door.” It evokes the image of a naive person who doesn’t know to shut his mind to false or impure teaching. He is undiscerning, ignorant, and gullible, but God’s Word makes him wise. Such a man is skilled in the art of godly living: He submits to Scripture and knows how to apply it to his circumstances. The Word of God thus takes a simple mind with no discernment and makes it skilled in the issues of life.

Scripture Is Right, Causing Joy

In verse 8, David adds a third statement about Scripture’s sufficiency: “The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.” Rather than simply indicating what is right as opposed to wrong, the word translated “right” has the sense of showing someone the true path. The truths of Scripture lay out the proper path through the difficult maze of life. That brings a wonderful confidence. So many people are

distressed or despondent because they lack direction and purpose, and most of them seek answers from the wrong sources. God's Word not only provides the light to our path (Ps. 119:105), but also sets the route before us.

Because it steers us through the right course of life, God's Word brings great joy. If one is depressed, anxious, fearful, or doubting, the solution is found not in self-indulgent pursuits like self-esteem and self-fulfillment. The solution is found in learning to obey God's counsel and sharing in the resulting delight. Divine truth is the fount of true and lasting joy. All other sources are shallow and fleeting.

Scripture Is Pure, Enlightening the Eyes

Psalm 19:8 gives a fourth characteristic of Scripture's utter sufficiency: "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." This word "pure" could better be translated "clear" or "lucid," and it indicates that Scripture is not mystifying, confusing, or puzzling. God's Word reveals truth to make the dark things light, bringing eternity into bright focus. Granted, there are things in Scripture that are hard to understand (2 Pet. 3:16), but taken as a whole, the Bible is not a bewildering book. It is clear and lucid.

Because of its absolute clarity, Scripture brings understanding where there is ignorance, order where there is confusion, and light where there is spiritual and moral darkness. It stands in stark contrast to the muddled musings of unredeemed men, who themselves are blind and unable to discern truth or live righteously. God's Word clearly reveals the blessed, hopeful truths they can never see.

Scripture Is Clean, Enduring Forever

In Psalm 19:9 David uses the term "fear" as a synonym for God's Word: "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever." This "fear" speaks of the reverential awe for God that compels believers to worship Him. Scripture, in this sense, is the divine manual on how to worship the Lord. The Hebrew word "clean" speaks of the absence of impurity, filthiness, defilement, or imperfection. Scripture is without sin, evil, corruption, or error. The truth it conveys is therefore absolutely undefiled and without blemish.

Because it is flawless, Scripture endures forever (Ps. 19:9). Any change or modification could only introduce imperfection. Scripture is eternally and unalterably perfect. It needs no updating, editing, or refining, for it is God's revelation for every generation. The Bible was written by the omniscient Spirit of God, who is infinitely more sophisticated than anyone who dares stand in judgment on Scripture's relevancy for our society, and infinitely wiser than all the best philosophers, analysts, and psychologists who pass like a childhood parade into irrelevancy. Scripture has always been and will

always be sufficient.

Scripture Is True, Altogether Righteous

Verse 9 provides the final characteristic and effect of God's all-sufficient Word: "The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether." The word "judgments" in this context refers to ordinances or divine verdicts from the bench of the Supreme Judge of the earth. The Bible is God's standard for judging the life and eternal destiny of every person. Because Scripture is true, it is "righteous altogether" (Ps. 19:9). The implication of that phrase is that its truthfulness produces a comprehensive righteousness in those who accept it.

Contrary to what many are teaching today, there is no need for additional revelations, visions, words of prophecy, or insights from modern psychology. In contrast to the theories of men, God's Word is true and absolutely comprehensive. Rather than seeking something more than God's glorious revelation, Christians need only to study and obey what they already have. Scripture is sufficient.

Adapted from John MacArthur, *Our Sufficiency in Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1998). For a fuller treatment of the sufficiency of Scripture, consult this resource.

© 2002 Grace Community Church. All rights reserved.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2014 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).