



THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE



The Sufficiency of Scripture

OR

A Biblical Case for Biblical Sufficiency, Usefulness, Comprehensiveness and Exclusivity

If I were to ask you the simple question – Do you believe the Bible is all one needs for salvation and spiritual growth? – You’d probably all agree. In other words, do you believe the Scriptures are sufficient?

To take this issue a step further, would you use the word “exclusive” to identify your view of the Scriptures’ resources for salvation and spiritual growth? In other words are you convinced of the Bible’s sufficiency to the exclusion of every other possible available and competing resource?

There is a battle going on today. The essence or nature of the battle is the belief that either the Bible is not enough or that there are other sources to draw on for mankind’s needs, or a combination of both. The upshot of this battle is that, the Bible, God’s Word to man, is somehow lacking or deficient in supplying what man needs for all of life and growth in godliness!

In an article entitled, *Biblical Counseling and Our Sufficiency in Christ*, John MacArthur has written these words:

*There is a subtle but pervasive strategy unfolding today among those who call themselves evangelical Christians. It is an attempt to deny the role of Scripture as the only source for spiritual truth. The church seems to have bought into the notion that God’s Word doesn’t really contain all we need to know to be effective in ministry. Many pastors and church leaders are turning to other sources to find “deeper” truth than they suppose Scripture contains. (John MacArthur, *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, Vol. XI, No. 2, Winter, 1993).*

There are many ways to craft questions that one way or another suggest, imply or directly state that the Bible is insufficient, inconclusive, deficient and/or in need of supplementation from other sources – be it psychology, psychiatry, sociology, mysticism, etc.

Some examples of the kinds of questions that could cause one to go beyond the Scriptures to answer if they do not have a solid grasp on the doctrine of biblical sufficiency are as follows:

Does the Bible contain everything you need in order to effectively minister to others?

Is the Bible comprehensive? Is God’s revelation full and complete – is the Canon closed?

Did God leave anything out that is needed? Does the Bible need supplementing?

Has God spoken finally, fully, completely, comprehensively, sufficiently and exclusively in the text of Scripture?

If He has (and He has) then you, pastor, deacon, Sunday school teacher, counselor, disciple-maker, parent, husband, etc. need go nowhere else to find all you need to address the issues of justification and progressive sanctification.

I want to begin by establishing theologically (arguments anchored in the overall study of God and His Word) and Biblically (arguments anchored in an expositional evaluation of several specific passages) the unquestionable nature of the Scripture's sufficiency.

There are several passages that clearly establish the non-negotiable fact that God's Word is absolutely and unquestionably sufficient.

We will examine them in detail. You must be convinced of this in order to minister to and serve your people with complete hope and confidence.

2 Timothy 3:15-17

2 Timothy 3:15-17 *And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (16) All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (17) That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

This is such a key passage. Paul deals with the Scripture's sufficiency for the two all encompassing and all-inclusive needs of man.

When the context of this passage is closely examined you have an even more intense statement regarding sufficiency.

Paul was informing Timothy as to the nature of the society in which Timothy would be ministering (2 Timothy 3:1-13). There was nothing encouraging about the society – but the powerful encouragement came in vv. 14-17.

Salvation or Justification (2 Timothy 3:15)

The Scriptures are able (1410) or powerful to make people wise about salvation. This word able (1410) is the same basic word Paul uses in Romans 1:16 – the gospel of Christ is the power (1411) of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.

This word “able” (1410) means “to be able, have power, by virtue of one's own ability and resources.”

The writer of Hebrews in chapter 4 verse 12 uses two other words that accentuate the active nature of God's Word.

Hebrews 4:12 *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

Powerful (1756-energes) – energy, energetic, engaged in work, capable of doing, active, powerful.

Quick (2198- zoa) – to be intensively alive. To have life.

The point is that the Scriptures are not passive but powerful, active, energetic – able to do what God intended them to do. They themselves are powerful because of the God whose words they are and His design and purpose for His words.

Spiritual Growth or Progressive Sanctification (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

The Scriptures are not only able or powerful to save, but they are profitable or useful (5624) to bring believers to their predestined goal (Romans 8:28-29) of Christlikeness.

Spiros Zodhiates defines the word profitable or useful (5624) as *“to be useful, profitable or advantageous, helpful.”*

Paul also establishes in this text an equally important characteristic of Scripture upon which the doctrine of sufficiency stands – that of inspiration.

Following is a discussion of this vital characteristic by John MacArthur from his book Charismatic Chaos on pp. 51-52:

What Does Inspiration Mean?

Our word inspired comes from a Latin root meaning, “to breathe in.” Unfortunately, that does not convey the true meaning of the Greek term for “inspired” that is used in Scripture. Actually the concept of breathing in is not found in 2 Timothy 3:16 (“All Scripture is inspired by God”). Reading this meaning in has misled many people about the true meaning of inspiration. They have assumed that God breathed some kind of divine life into the words of those who penned the original documents of Scripture. But the Greek term for inspiration is theopneustos, which means “God-breathed.” Literally the verse says, “All Scripture is God-breathed” – that is, Scripture is not the words of men into which God puffed divine life. It is the very breath of God! Scripture is God himself speaking.

That truth is one many people seem prone to misunderstand. Inspiration does not mean the Bible contains God’s revelation. It does not mean gems of revealed truth are concealed in Scripture. It does not mean men wrote God’s truth in their own words. It does not mean God merely assisted the writers. It means that the words of the Bible are the words of God himself. Every word of Scripture was breathed out by God.

At the burning bush, God said to Moses, “Go and I, even I will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say” (Exodus 4:12). Jeremiah, the weeping prophet of Judah, received this charge from God: “All that I command you, you shall speak...Behold I have put my words in your mouth” (Jeremiah 1:7, 9). And God said to Ezekiel, “Son of man, go to the house of Israel...Take into your heart all my words which I shall speak to you, and listen closely...And speak to them” (Ezekiel 3:4, 10-11).

A key verse describing how God speaks through Scripture is 2 Peter 1:21. Literally it says “No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy

Spirit spoke from God.” The most important word here is “moved,” which speaks of being carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Contained in this text are the four ways the Scriptures are useful for the Christ-like development and maturity of each of God’s children. The order is not arbitrary. Jay Adams gives us some help with the explanation of each.

1. Scripture is useful to *teach you truth or doctrine*. This sets the norms for life and godliness.

The word, *didaskalia* (1319) has primary reference to the **content** of teaching rather than the process of teaching. *Doctrine* gives you a clear understanding of what God requires. Scripture is the operational manual of divine truth that must govern the life of the believer. God’s Word is the only source of authoritative teaching. **It teaches you what is right.**

2. Scripture is useful *for reproof*, to convict you of sin and error.

The Greek term for reproof (*elegchos*, 1650) implies “the rebuking of another, with such fervent wielding of the victorious arm of truth, so as to bring him, if not always to confession, at least to conviction, of his sin” (Trench). As Scripture confronts and rebukes misconduct and false teaching, it brings a certain persuasion, producing an acknowledgment that you have not met God’s requirements. **Scripture teaches you what is wrong, or, not right.**

3. Scripture is useful to *correct your thinking and behavior*.

This Greek word translated *correction* (1882 –*epanorthosis*), literally means “to set right again,” “to straighten up,” or “to lift up.” In other words, after knocking you down with reproof or conviction, Scripture restores you to a proper spiritual posture, by teaching you confession, forgiveness, and righting of wrongs. Here is great hope for putting life back where it should be – in the proper relationship to God and man. **It teaches you how to make the wrong right.**

4. Scripture is useful to *instruct (train) you in righteous living*.

The word *instruction* is the Greek term *paideia* (3809). It comes from the verb *paideuo*, which means, “to bring up a child.” This verse pictures God’s Word training believers as a parent would train a child. From spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity, Scripture trains believers in godly living so that new righteous ways are re-habituated into life. **It teaches you how to keep the wrong right.**

Now Paul doesn’t stop with just sort of an academic view of the doctrine of sufficiency. In verse 17 he fleshes out the result of the one who has been helped by this useful Word.

Again it is important to understand Paul gave these four steps or aspects in a **divine** order. When this order is followed, Paul says the man of God, woman of God, teenager of God will be perfectly equipped, rigged out (as a boat for a voyage with nothing lacking) thoroughly supplied so as to be **mature** and **able** to do all God requires of him (v.17).

God's Word completely outfits the believer to handle all of life in God-pleasing ways. It is totally and absolutely sufficient.

Three times and in three ways Paul emphasizes the sufficiency of Scripture – 2 Timothy 3:17.

1. **“Perfect”** – In the Greek this word (Artios) means “adequate, capable, fitted, complete, proficient.”

As defined by Arndt and Gingrich – “able to meet all demands.”

If a man/woman is inadequate, it is not because the Bible is inadequate but simply because he/she does not know his Bible adequately.

The word **“perfect”** is “artios” in the Greek, which means “to fit, complete, sufficient, completely qualified.”

The following passages use the word “katartezo” (2675) which is derived from “artios”. The fundamental meaning is to put a thing in its appropriate condition, to establish, set up, equip, arrange, prepare, mend.

a. **Mark 1:19:** *And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship **mending** their nets.*

“mending” – The nets were to be mended so as to do the work they were **intended** to do.

The point in using all these scriptural illustrations is to show how **broad** and full the meaning of “perfect” is; the word Paul uses to describe what God's Word does for you!

b. **Galatians 6:1:** ***Brethren**, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, **restore** such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*

“restore” – The idea is to bring a place of **usefulness** again.

c. **Luke 6:40:** *The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is **perfect** shall be as his master.*

The NASB translates this as **“fully trained”**.

“fully trained” – This is God's goal for us. Raw recruits need to be **trained**.

d. **Ephesians 4:11-12:** *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (12) For the **perfecting** of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:*

The NASB translates this as **“equipping”**.

“perfecting” – This is one of the goals of the pastor's work. God's people need to be **fitted out** so they can **function** in all manner of life to please God.

e. **1 Peter 5:10:** *But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you **perfect**, establish, strengthen, settle you.*

“**perfect**” – This is one of the **goals** of the pastor as he labors.

f. **1 Thessalonians 3:10:** *Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might **perfect** that which is lacking in your faith?*

The NASB translates this as “**complete**”.

“**perfect**” – To **supply** what is necessary.

g. **Hebrews 13:21:** *Make you **perfect** in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

The NASB translates this as “**equip**”.

“**perfect**” – This is the pastor’s **desire** for the flock. The pastor’s prayer is for the flock to be **equipped** to do the will of God.

- Fulfilling the intended purpose
- Usefulness
- Fully Trained
- Fitted out for full function
- Supply all that is necessary
- To be equipped fully

2. “**Thoroughly furnished**” – The Greek word (exartizo) means “fully equip.”

This word is **more intensive** than “*perfect*.” The following passage uses the word “exartizo.”

Acts 21:5 *And when we had **accomplished** those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.*

The NASB translates this as “**ended**”.

“**accomplished**” – It is to complete **entirely** what was appointed for them.

The Scriptures complete us **fully** for whatever God wants us to accomplish.

The idea here is not to simply provide adequately for but to thoroughly equip for a task; leaving nothing to chance, supplying everything that might be needed.

Before a ship was to set sail, all needs on the journey would be considered and supplies to meet each would be stored on board (food, tools, canvas for new sails, etc.). The ship would be thoroughly rigged out.

Can you think of some things that might easily have been forgotten or left behind when the ship was rigged out?

Paul says that the “man of God” (the minister of the Word) is complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. The word used is the term that described the efforts made to furnish a ship, so that no matter what emergency might be encountered on its voyage, it would be equipped to meet it. The ship owner tried to anticipate every possible problem ahead of time and rigged it out with gear calculated to meet these. Paul says, then that there is no ministry situation for which the man of God is not adequately equipped by the Scriptures. All of the answers for pursuing the four comprehensive activities mentioned above (4 steps of 2 Timothy 3:16) are in the Bible. There is no need for eclecticism. This passage very plainly says that all we need as the basic foundation and framework for helping others and helping ourselves has been given to us.

You, Christian, have the resources. The resources are not in the outside expert, the resources are not in the counselee, nor are they in ourselves. The resources are in God. **All** the resources are in God. That is the Bible’s answer and therefore, that must be the Christian viewpoint. The God of all resources graciously has given them to us fully in His Word.

3. “Unto all good works”

Scripture does not contain **everything**. (It is not a text for electrical engineering, aeronautics, etc.)

But it is entirely adequate and comprehensive as the textbook for living and for changing our lives to conform to God’s requirements.

2 Timothy 3:16 – “good works”.

What are the “good works?”

The text says “every good work.”

The text says God’s Word is what equips for every good work!!

It is what is used in Ephesians 2:10 – we were not saved by works (Ephesians 2:9) but unto good works.

The Bible says the Word thoroughly equips for every good work.

The word *works* (ergon – 2041) in the KJV means “*performance, the result or object of employment, making or working*” – Zodiates Study Bible, p. 1692

The word is used basically of the believer’s employment as a child of God – what he does, says, etc.

And the Word of God furnishes all he needs to live for God well.

The term *ergon* is used in the following ways:

Ephesians 4:12 – The believer’s work of ministry.

1 Thessalonians 5:13 – The minister’s work.

Acts 4:26 – Paul’s work of church planting.

2 Timothy 4:5 – The work of Timothy as an evangelist.

1 Corinthians 3:13 – The work for which man will be evaluated at the judgment seat.
James 2:22, 25 – It is the works whereby faith is verified and demonstrated.

It seems clear that this term covers the entirety of the believer's life.

Every good [(agathos – 18) “good, benevolent, profitable, useful” – Zodiates Study Bible p. 1656] work is comprehensive Christianity – all that God created and/or recreated man to do (Ephesians 2:10) is covered under that term...and it is the word of God that fully, completely, sufficiently, comprehensively and totally fits him, supplies him with all he needs to perform them to the glory of God!

Scripture supplies the believer with **all** he/she needs to meet every circumstance encountered in ministering the Word or handling life...for every good work.

Our problem is not that we do not have what we need in the Bible, but that we do not have enough of the Bible in us, which we need!!

Now we move to the second text that establishes Biblical sufficiency.

Psalm 19:7-14

Psalms 19:7-14 *The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. (8) The statutes 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 judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. (10) More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. (11) Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward. (12) Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. (13) Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. (14) Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.*

The following work on Psalm 19:7-9 is drawn from Pastor Dennis Horne. It was a presentation he did at a tri-annual meeting of Pastors for Nouthetic Ministry in Greensboro, N.C. – February 1, 2001.

“The Lord makes six statements about Scripture’s adequacy.

*Each of the six statements contains three elements: a **title** for the Lord’s Word (with each title communicating a different aspect of Scripture), a **characteristic** that describes the Lord’s Word, and a **benefit** produced by the Lord’s Word. Let us investigate each.*

Psalm 19:7-9			
Verse	Title	Characteristic	Benefit

7a	Law	Perfect	Converts the Soul
7b	Testimony	Sure	Makes the simple wise
8a	Statutes	Right	Rejoices the heart
8b	Commandment	Pure	Enlightens the eyes
9a	Fear	Clean	Endures forever
9b	Judgments	True	Righteous altogether

1. The law of the LORD [is] perfect, converting the soul (v. 7a).

“Law”(Torah)	“Perfect”	“Converts the Soul”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It refers to the fact that Scripture is God teaching truth to Man. ▪ Scripture is a complete manual laying out God’s law for your life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete; comprehensive. ▪ Scripture covers all aspects of an issue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Revives, refreshes the “life”, “heart” or the “inner person” of the man. ▪ Scripture is utterly sufficient for conversion, transformation and restoration.

Scripture is entitled **the law of the LORD**. This Hebrew word *law* is *torah* (8451). **It refers to the fact that Scripture is God teaching truth to man.**

Scripture is a complete manual laying out God’s law for your life.

Here, Scripture is characterized as *perfect* (8549). *Perfect* speaks of perfection in every sense of the word. Scripture is *perfect* as opposed to imperfect. Scripture is *perfect* as opposed to incomplete. *Perfect* could accurately be translated as “comprehensive.”

Scripture is perfect – comprehensive – It covers all aspects of an issue. It is completely sufficient – flawless – comprehensive.

Consider what Albert Barnes wrote concerning the perfection of Scripture.

The meaning [of “perfect”] is that [Scripture] lacks nothing [for] its completeness; nothing in order that it might be what it should. It is complete as a revelation of Divine truth; it is complete as a rule of conduct...It is absolutely true; it is adapted with consummate wisdom to the [needs] of man; it is an unerring guide of conduct. There is nothing there which would lead men into error or sin; there is nothing essential for man to know which may not be found there. (Notes on the Old Testament: Psalms, vol.1, p. 71).

What is the benefit produced by this comprehensive manual of God? It *converts the soul*. Scripture *converts* (7725) – *revives or refreshes the soul* – *nephesh* – the “life,” the “heart” or the “inner person” of man.

Scripture – God’s manual of law for your life – is so comprehensive that it **can totally transform the inner person**. Scripture is utterly sufficient for conversion,

transformation, and restoration, for both spiritual birth and spiritual growth. Scripture can transform any individual into the precise person God wants him to be! (Is there a more vivid example than the apostle Paul – a torturer, a murderer who was totally transformed by God’s Word?)

Let me comment a little further regarding this word convert which describes the impact of God’s Word on man’s soul...his inner man.

Spiros Zodihates says this word means “to turn around, to turn back.” He says the basic meaning of *shûb* (7725) is movement back to the point of departure.

Genesis 3:19 *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*

God tells Adam he will go back to the ground where he came from.

The following passages deal with Israel’s return from exile – to where they belong.

Ezra 2:1 *Now these are the children of the province that went up out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city;*

Nehemiah 7:6 *These are the children of the province, that went up out of the captivity, of those that had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and came again to Jerusalem and to Judah, every one unto his city;*

Isaiah 10:22 *For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness.*

Jeremiah 22:10 *Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him: but weep sore for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country.*

2 Chronicles 10:9 *And he said unto them, What advice give ye that we may return answer to this people, which have spoken to me, saying, Ease somewhat the yoke that thy father did put upon us?*

This Psalm 19:7 text is not a text of redemption but the impact of the Word of God on a man, woman, boy or girl who is a believer – it puts that person totally and completely where he needs to be. His inner man is totally adjusted.

2. The testimony of the LORD [is] sure, making wise the simple (v. 7b).

“Testimony”	“Sure”	“Makes wise”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scripture is spoken of as being a divine witness ▪ Scripture is God’s sure testimony of who He is and what He requires of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unmistakable; reliable; worthy to be trusted ▪ Scripture is more certain than anything else 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Skilled in all aspects of holy living” ▪ The Old Testament defines wisdom as the ability to make right choices in daily conduct

man

Scripture is called *the testimony* (5715) of the LORD.

Testimony speaks of Scripture being a divine witness – God’s sure testimony to who He is and what He requires of man.

The characteristic of Scripture here is expressed by the word **sure** (539).

The word **defines Scripture to be unmistakable, reliable, worthy to be trusted.** Scripture is more certain than anything else. (You may recall Peter stating that Scripture is a surer and more convincing confirmation of God’s Truth than what he had seen and heard at the transfiguration of Christ – 2 Peter 1:16-18). It can be trusted. It provides a foundation on which to build your life and eternal destiny.

What is the benefit produced by this trustworthy witness of God? It *makes wise* (2449) *the simple*. Scripture makes the simple wise. Consistently in the Old Testament, wisdom is defined as the ability to make right choices in daily conduct. This word **wise means “skilled in all aspects of holy living.”**

John MacArthur has written:

The Hebrew word translated “simple” in this verse comes from a root that describes an open door. The Old Testament saints viewed a simple-minded person as having an open door to the intellect. Did you ever hear somebody say, “I’m open-minded”? An Old Testament Jew would say, “Close it!” In their way of thinking, a simpleton was someone who was literally open-minded – unable to keep anything in or out. The same Hebrew term is used often in the Proverbs to identify the naïve person, the undiscerning, the non-discriminating, inexperienced, and uninformed fool. According to the psalmist, then, Scripture – the sure, reliable, trustworthy, unwavering testimony from God about Himself – comes to the one who is simple and makes him wise. (Introduction to Biblical Counseling, Word Publishers, p. 328).

Scripture, God’s divine witness and sure testimony, is so reliable and trustworthy that it can take a simple mind with no discernment and make it skilled in all the issues of life – In all aspects of holy living. What a sanctifying power!

“Hebrew wisdom was very practical. It was based on what God revealed about right and wrong. This all applied to daily life.” – Zodiahtes

3. The statutes of the LORD [are] right, rejoicing the heart (v. 8a).

“Statutes”

“Right”

“Rejoices the heart”

- Scripture is spoken of as divine principles or *precepts* and guidelines for character and conduct.
- Has the sense of showing someone the *true* path.
- Scripture lays out the proper path through the difficult maze of life.
- God did not leave man to wander around in a fog of human opinion.
- Scripture brings true joy to one's life as he walks according to divine principles.

The third title for Scripture is **statutes** (6490). This term speaks of God's Word as **divine principles or precepts and guidelines for character and conduct**. The Word of God is a divine set of guidelines for living.

These guidelines are *right* (3477). This is the third characteristic of Scripture. **Right in this text has the sense of showing someone the true path**. The truths of Scripture lay out the proper path through the difficult maze of life. God did not leave man to wander around in a fog of human opinion. God's Word sets the route before you.

What is the benefit produced by this divine set of guidelines for living? They *rejoice the heart*. **Scripture brings true joy to one's life as he walks according to divine principles**.

You who live according to the path outlined in God's Word find complete and true joy! As Spurgeon has written in his *Treasury of David*, "*The truth which makes the heart right then gives joy to the right heart.*"

Scripture, God's guidelines for traveling the true path of spiritual life, brings fullness of joy! (See Psalm 1 and Joshua 1:8).

4. The commandment of the LORD [is] pure, enlightening the eyes (v. 8 b).

“Commandment”	“Pure”	“Enlightens the eyes”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stresses the non-optional nature of the Bible and pictures Scripture as the divine <i>mandate</i>. ▪ It is not a book of suggestions from God; it contains divine, non-negotiable commands. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Clear to see” ▪ Scripture is not mystifying, confusing or puzzling. ▪ Although there are things that are hard to understand, as a whole, the Bible is not a bewildering book. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ God’s Word reveals truth to make dark things light. ▪ Scripture brings understanding where there is ignorance.

Here is yet a fourth characteristic of Scriptures’ utter sufficiency. The word **commandment** (4687) in this phrase **stresses the non-optional nature of the Bible and pictures Scripture as the divine mandate**. Scripture, *the commandment of the Lord*, is a divine mandate that is authoritative and binding. The Bible is not a book of suggestions from God. It contains divine commands that are non-negotiable.

How does the Psalmist describe these commandments of God? He depicts them to be **pure** (1249) which simply **means ‘clear’ to see**. God’s mandates are lucid, easy to see, giving clear direction. Scripture is not mystifying, confusing, or puzzling. Granted, there are things in Scripture that are hard to understand. But taken as a whole, the Bible is not a bewildering book.

God’s Word is a revelation – a revealing of truth to make dark things light. Hence, the Psalmist adds the phrase, *enlightening the eyes*. This is the fourth benefit of Scripture. **Scripture**, because of its absolute clarity, **brings understanding where there is ignorance**, order where there is confusion and light where there is spiritual and moral darkness. It stands in contrast to the muddled musings of unredeemed men, who themselves are blind and unable to discern truth or live righteously. God’s Word reveals the blessed, hopeful truths the unredeemed can never see. The Scripture, God’s easily understood mandates, brings light and understanding to the ignorant and the simple. This is the very reason the Psalmist could say, *I have more understanding than my teachers: for thy testimonies [are] my meditations. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts (Psalm 119:99)*.

5. The fear of the LORD [is] clean, enduring forever. (v. 9a).

<i>“Fear”</i>	<i>“Clean”</i>	<i>“Endures forever”</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Speaks of the reverential awe for God that compels man to worship Him. ▪ Scripture is God’s manual on how to worship Him. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Speaks of the absence of impurity, filthiness, defilement, or imperfection. ▪ Scripture is without corruption, without error, and is holy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Permanently and eternally relevant. ▪ Mark 13:31 is a guarantee that the Bible is permanent, unchanging, and therefore relevant to any person, in any culture.

Here is a very unusual term that David employs as a synonym for God’s Word. Because of the parallelism in these verses, we know *fear* refers to Scripture. Why does David identify Scripture with this term? ***Fear (3374) speaks of the reverential awe for God that compels man to worship Him.*** Scripture, in this sense, is God’s manual on how to worship Him. It teaches us how to fear God, how to reverence him. Since God created man to be a worshipping creature, he needs instruction about Whom to worship and how to worship properly.

The Psalmist’s fifth characteristic of Scripture is that it is ***clean (2889)***. This Hebrew word (*tahor*) speaks of the absence of impurity, filthiness, defilement, or imperfection. The Scripture is unclouded by sin. **Psalm 12:6** says, *The words of the Lord [are] pure (flawless) words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.* As a manual on worship, the Bible is *clean*, that is, it is without evil, without corruption, and without error. There is no impurity in it. It is hallowed; it is holy. It is separated from sin.

The Word of God will lead you into purity. You will never find in Scripture any misrepresentation of God, man, Satan, angels, or demons. You will never find any misstatement of what is right or wrong. Everything here is absolutely clean and unclouded. Here is a perfect source for you!

What is the benefit of this pure Word of God? Since Scripture is *clean*, pure, flawless, **it endures (5975) forever. It remains, continues and is established; therefore it is permanently and eternally relevant.** It does not need updating. It does not need editing. It does need to be polished or refined. Any change or modification could only introduce imperfection. Scripture is eternally and unalterably perfect.

Jesus said, *Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away (Mark 13:31).* That statement is a guarantee that the Bible is permanent, unchanging, and therefore relevant to everyone in every age of history. Any person living at any time in human history, in any culture, in any climate, will find the Bible completely applicable. The same basic principles of God’s Word apply equally to a myriad of different peoples and situations with the same powerful effect. Scripture is God’s revelation for every generation.

6. The judgments of the LORD [are] true [and] righteous altogether (v. 9b).

“Judgments”	“True”	“Righteous altogether”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Describes Scripture as divine <i>verdicts</i>. ▪ The Bible is God’s standard for judging the life and eternal destiny of every person. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scripture contains ultimate <i>truth</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implies that the Scripture’s truthfulness produces a comprehensive righteousness in those who accept it. ▪ It is the complete and exhaustive source of truth.

David gives the sixth and final title, characteristic, and benefit of Scripture. The word **Judgments (4941) describes Scripture as divine verdicts**. It is a judicial term. The Scriptures are **ordinances from the bench of the Supreme Judge of the earth**. From the position of His divine bench, God has made some pronouncements. The Bible is God’s standard for judging the life and eternal destiny of every person.

How does David characterize these *judgments*? He says they are *true* (571). **God’s written Word contains ultimate truth!** Where can man go to find salvation? Where can man go to find the skill necessary for living his daily life? Where can man go to discover an overcoming joy during all the trials of life? Where can man go to receive light on the dark things of life? Where can man go for a permanent resource that never changes? Where can man go for truth? There is only one answer: God’s Word.

This same word is used in Jer. 10:10 to speak of God Himself – “The Lord is the *true* (571) God”.

Concerning the truth of Scripture, Spurgeon has written:

God’s judgments, all of them together, or each of them apart, are manifestly just, and need no laborious excuses to justify them. The judicial decisions of Jehovah, as revealed in the law, or illustrated in the history of his providence, are truth itself, and commend themselves to every truthful mind... (Treasury of David, Vol. I, p.309)

The benefit of these true, divine verdicts is obvious – they **are Righteous (6663) altogether**. The implication of that phrase is **that Scripture’s truthfulness produces a comprehensive righteousness in those who accept it**. These true *judgments* produce a practical righteousness in every posture of the believer’s lifestyle. And because they are a complete and exhaustive source of truth and righteousness, man is forbidden to add to it, take from it, or distort it in any way (Revelation 22:18-19).

Conclusion: Nowhere else can you find that which can totally transform the whole person, make him wise, bring him joy, enlighten his eyes, be permanently relevant, and produce comprehensive righteousness. Believers have truth about everything that really matters. What an enormous privilege to possess the Word of truth!

In the text of *Our Sufficiency in Christ*, John MacArthur has written:

Contrary to what many are teaching today, there is no need for additional revelations, visions, or words of prophecy. 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 (pp. 87-88).

It is no wonder the Psalmist sums up in verses 10-13 what God is saying about His Word. Consider what He says.

Greatest Possession	More precious than gold (v. 10a)
Greatest Pleasure	Sweeter than honey (v. 10b)
Greatest Protection	Warns us from error (v. 11a)
(Offers) Greatest Promise	Eternal reward (v. 11b)
Greatest Purifier	Keeping us from sin (v. 13a)

- **19:10a** – *More to be desired [are they] than gold, yea, than much fine gold: Scripture is our greatest **possession** – more precious than gold!*
- **19:10b** – *sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Scripture is the greatest **pleasure** – sweeter than honey!*
- **19:11a** – *Moreover by them is thy servant warned: Scripture is the greatest **protection** – warning us from error!*
- **19:11b** – *[and] in keeping of them [there] is great reward. Scripture offers the greatest **promise** – eternal reward!*
- **19:13a** – *Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous [sins]; Scripture is the greatest **purifier** – keeping us from sin!*

There is no excuse for not accepting Scripture as sufficient, knowing and applying its content, and submitting to its requirements. **Your spiritual health depends on placing the utmost value on the Word of God and obeying it with an eager heart.** If you think you can find answers to your problems through human counsel or worldly wisdom, you are forfeiting the most valuable and only reliable source of answers to the human dilemma. Do not relinquish the sweet, satisfying riches of God's Word for the bitter gall of this world's folly.

Luke 16:19-31

Luke 16:19-31 *There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: (20) And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, (21) And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. (22) And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; (23) And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. (24)*

And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. (25) But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. (26) And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. (27) Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: (28) For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. (29) Abraham saith unto him, they have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. (30) And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. (31) And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

This is a familiar text to most everyone. It deals with two men who died. The one went to hell, the other to Abraham's bosom.

The question at the end of the text is simply this: Is scripture all one needs? Is it sufficient? Is it adequate, comprehensive and powerful enough? Or does it need a sensational experience to make it more riveting? Does it need a contemporary up-to-date wow-me-with-something kind of experience to help it out?

This is quite the "drama" – although this is true drama.

In this story the Holy Spirit chooses to emphasize the thing the Charismatics, mystics etc. want to bypass – the Word of God is *God's tool of choice*...not fantastic stories, tales from the other side, visions, dreams and/or sensationalism.

This is a clear and dramatic contrast established. It is what will and what won't sufficiently convince the brothers of a man in Hell. If they refuse the written record – then nothing else will work – not even a "back-from-the-dead" story.

The questions posed above are clearly answered in v. 27-31. The word of God is sufficient. It does not need an experience of any sort to qualify it or to make it of contemporary value.

Sequence of events in v. 27-31

- Rich man begs for someone to inform his brothers of an awful place. (vs. 27, 28)
- Abraham appeals to the Word – Moses and the prophets (vs. 29).
- Rich man argues that someone from the dead will be convincing and cause his brothers to repent (vs. 30).
- But Abraham reconfirms the fact that God's Word cannot be replaced by any experience – even a "back from the dead experience." It is God's Word – not personal experience – that God will use.

It is interesting that of the last three texts mentioned, each one specifically says that not only is God's word sufficient but anything that would be used to supplement it, or substitute for it (experiences, human reasoning, etc.) is completely and woefully substandard and unnecessary.

It cannot be anymore clear that what God gave us is all we need.

2 Peter 1:16-21

2 Peter 1:16-21 *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. (17) For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (18) And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. (19) We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: (20) Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. (21) For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

The text is clearly Peter's comments about his personal experience at the transfiguration of Christ – and what an experience that must have been.

That **personal experience** however is used as a backdrop to establish something far more certain and reliable than what one **sees and hears**.

The word for “more sure” in v. 19 is the Greek word *bebaios* (949). *It means “fixed, sure, certain. Figuratively, that upon which one may build, rely on, trust. That which does not fail or waver, immoveable and on which one may rely.” Zodhiates, p.896.*

The words “more sure” should not be considered in any way to even imply that “experience is somewhat certain...the Bible is just more certain.”

Peter is not intending to lend any credibility to experience but, on the contrary, to steer the reader away from experience to the Word of God.

The text is not implying that experience is a “close 2nd” to God's Word regarding trustworthiness. It is doing just the opposite. It is purposefully and intentionally minimizing the trustworthiness of experience.

So as you examine the text, there is not an issue of favorable comparison but a sharp and distinct contrast.

The one thing (experience) is not reliable, consistent or to be trusted regardless of how real it seems or feels.

The other thing is always without question reliable, permanently fixed, absolutely sure and unquestionably certain.

This Greek term *bebaios* is translated as follows:

- Hebrews 6:9 – steadfast
- Romans 4:16 – sure (KJV)
- certain (NASB)

- 2 Corinthians 1:7 – steadfast (KJV)
- firmly grounded (NASB)
- Hebrews 2:2 – steadfast (KJV)
- proved unalterable (NASB)
- Hebrews 3:6 – firm
- 2 Peter 1:10 – sure (KJV)
- certain (NASB)

“The Greek word order is crucial in that it does not say that the transfiguration confirmed the Scriptures. It says “and we have more sure the prophetic word.” That original arrangement of the sentence supports the interpretation that Peter is ranking Scripture over experience. The prophetic word (Scripture) is more complete, more permanent and more authoritative than the experience of anyone. More specifically, the Word of God is a more reliable verification of the teachings about the person, atonement and second coming of Christ than even the genuine first hand experiences of the Apostles themselves.” – MacArthur Study Bible, p. 1954.

Peter follows up by saying and you better *take heed* to what the Scriptures say.

“The prophetic word of scripture is a more solid proof than even the spectacular experience of witnessing the transfiguration – “we have also the more sure prophetic word.” Geneva Study Bible, p.1980.

This passage is Peter’s reflection and evaluation on his own **personal experience** of witnessing the transfiguration of Jesus recorded in Matthew 17:1-6. Peter **saw** with his own two eyes and **heard** with his own two ears the **sights** and **sounds** of the manifestation of the glory of Jesus Christ. What an experience that would have been!

But after all the incredible and mind-boggling observations that Peter actually **sees** and **hears** (remember he actually and literally **sees** the glory of Christ and **hears** the voice of God), he makes a powerfully significant statement in v. 19.

All those who would depart from the Scriptures to confirm anything of a spiritual nature must deal with this text.

If Scripture is surer, then experience must be at least suspect and unreliable.

1 Corinthians 2:10-16

1 Corinthians 2:10-16 *But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. (11) For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man, which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. (12) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit, which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. (13) Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (14) But the*

natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (15) But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. (16) For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

After elaborating on the total inadequacy of human reason in providing help in solving the problems of man (1:18-2:8), Paul describes what does speak to man's problems. It is the Wisdom of God (2:6-7) in contrast to the wisdom of man (1:19-20).

Paul explains in three basic and successive steps the transmission of God's wisdom to man.

First is Revelation – 2:10-11

The act of God the Holy Spirit imparting to Bible writers truth incapable of being discovered by man's unaided reason.

Second is Inspiration – 2:12, 13

The act of God the Holy Spirit enabling the Bible writers to write down in God-chosen words infallibly, the truth revealed.

Third is Illumination – 2:14-16

The act of God the Holy Spirit enabling believers to understand the truth given by revelation and written down by inspiration.

It is interesting that Paul not only tells us about the only way one can know God (*this of course has strong implications to sufficiency*) in 2:10-16, but he also tells us how we cannot know God (*this, too, has strong implications to sufficiency*) in 2:9.

Paul wrote this passage to a radical group that stands out in history as the most intellectual of all people – The Greeks.

They were a race of creative thinkers. Their sole instrument used to pierce through the mysteries of existence was their own human reason.

Paul was raised and trained by the best. So by making the following statement he not only instructs, but testifies to his back being completely turned from his formal, pre-salvation training.

1 Corinthians 2:9 *But as it is written, **Eye** hath not seen, nor **ear** heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

Eye and Ear

...You cannot know God by *empiricism. observation, investigation, objective evidences, or scientific experiments.*

By the way, please note the similarities between this phrase, “eye and ear”, and the conclusion we just reached from 2 Peter 1:16-21.

These external experiences and observations are again here said to be woefully lacking, inadequate and insufficient for grasping spiritual truth. Paul and Peter agree!

Heart of man

...You cannot know God by *intuition, reasoning, musings, contemplations, subjectivism.*

You cannot come up with knowledge about God through some kind of intuitive hunch, feeling, mystical sensation, etc.

This second source (intuition) that Paul says is totally and completely inadequate to gain knowledge of God is akin to, if not the grandmother of, what today is expressed by some as mysticism.

Although my aim is not to digress too far off track, I do believe an explanation of mysticism could be in order because of its contemporary nature and its theological conflict with and adversarial posture set against our subject – the sufficiency of Scripture.

Arthur L. Johnson has written a magnificent book entitled ***Faith Misguided*** (currently out of print). It is a thorough treatment of the subject of mysticism. I will quote selectively from chapter 1, pp.20, 25, 26:

There are two aspects to mysticism that we must recognize to avoid confusion. First there is a psychological aspect, often called the mystical experience. Then there are the beliefs that arise from that experience. These philosophical and religious beliefs constitute a set of ideas sometimes collectively called mysticism. However, the term mysticism is often used for both the experience itself and the belief resulting from it. Our first major concern is to answer the question, What makes an experience mystical?

When we speak of a mystical experience we refer to an event that is completely within the person. It is totally subjective. It is the lack of objectivity in the mystical experience that presents the major difficulty for the mystic when he tries to justify his claim to knowledge.

We are now ready to develop a more formal, definition of mysticism. It will be helpful to do this from three slightly different perspectives: first, the psychological aspects; second: the philosophical implications; and finally, the theological expressions.

*The **psychological dimensions** involve assigning primary significance to inward, subjective, non-rational impressions. It involves seeing intense, non-cognitive, subjective experiences as having such deep significance that they should be sought. One's life should be directed by them.*

*For many people, mysticism is an unexamined psychological attitude – one that while it may profoundly influence their lives, is not clearly understood and may not even be recognized. But for a knowledgeable mystic who has sought to understand his commitment to the mystic way, this **psychological attitude** is grounded in a **philosophical belief**. This belief sees truth and knowledge as attainable through mystical experience. All truth is tested by inner, subjective impressions rather than by its logical consistency or other rational considerations.⁷ When mystical states constitute an*

intense experience, this experience is seen as somehow a “union” with whatever is ultimate, and therefore as the proper fulfillment of human existence.⁸

*When either the psychological attitude alone, or the more complete philosophical grasp, is translated into **theological terms**, the resulting view leads the person to equate his inner impressions or subjective states with the voice of God. Such a person, if he is a Christian, tends to believe that the activity of the Holy Spirit within us is expressed primarily through emotional or other non-cognitive aspects of our being. Having and “obeying” such experiences is what “being spiritual” is all about.*

7. Watchman Nee, *The Spiritual man* (New York; Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1968)

8. William Ralph Inge, *Mysticism in Religion* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1948), p.25. See also W.T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1960), p.66

2 Peter 1:2, 3

This text opens with the truth we are attempting to make clear and evident; that is, everything any believer needs for living a life that pleases God is provided!

No believer need be apprehensive or concerned that any necessary thing is left out of the reservoir of resources given him for living the Christian life fully and successfully.

There are two authors, who have, in my opinion, provided wonderful incites into the text we are considering.

I will quote them both, with little personal comment.

First, John MacArthur says the following in his commentary on 2 Peter 1:3:

Everything pertaining to life and godliness, (1:3b)

*Because of their constant sins and failures as Christians, many find it hard not to think that even after salvation something is missing in the sanctification process. This faulty idea causes believers to seek “second blessings”, “spirit baptisms”, tongues, mystical experiences, special psychological insights, private revelations, “self crucifixion”, the “deeper life”, heightened emotions, demon bindings, and combinations of various ones of all those in an attempt to attain what is supposedly missing from their spiritual resources. All manner of ignorance and Scripture twisting accompanies those foolish pursuits, which at their corrupt roots are failures to understand exactly what Peter says here. Christians have received **everything** in the form of divine power necessary to equip them for sanctification – they have no lack at all. In view of that reality, the Lord holds all believers responsible to obey all the commands of Scripture. Christians cannot claim that their sins and failures are the result of God’s limited provision. There is no temptation and no assault of Satan and demons that is beyond their resources to overcome (1 Cor. 10:13; 12:13; 1Peter 5:10). To stress the extent of the divine power given each believer, Peter makes the amazing statement that saints have received from God **everything pertaining to life and godliness**. Syntactically, the term **everything** is in the emphatic position because the Holy Spirit through Peter is stressing the extent of believers’ self-sufficiency.*

The great power that gave Christians spiritual life will sustain that **life** in all its fullness. Without asking for more, they already have every spiritual resource needed to persevere in holy living. **Life and godliness** define the realm of sanctification, the living of the Christian life on earth to the glory of God – between initial salvation and final glorification. With the gift of new life in Christ (John 3:15-16; 5:24; 6:47; Titus 3:7; 1 John 2:25) came everything related to sustaining that **life**, all the way to glorification. That is why believers are eternally secure (John 6:35-40; 10:28-29; 2 Cor. 5:1; 1 John 5:13; Jude 1, 24-25) and can be assured God will empower them to persevere to the end (Matt. 24:13; John 8:31; Heb. 3:6, 14; Rev. 2:10), through all temptations, sins, failures, vicissitudes, struggles, and trials of life.

The word translated godliness (*eusebeia*) encompasses both reverence in worship and its companion – active obedience. Saints should never question God's sufficiency, because His grace that is so powerful to save is equally powerful to sustain them and empower them to righteous conduct (Rom. 8:29-30; Phil. 1:6).

DIVINE PROCUREMENT through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. (1:3c)

In light of the divine power and provision available to Christians, the question then arises, "How does one experience those to the fullest?" The apostle indicates that it is **through the knowledge of Him. Knowledge** (*epignōsis*) refers to a knowledge that is deep and genuine. The word is sometimes used interchangeably with the more basic term *gnōsis*, which means simply knowledge.

Second, Jay Adams says the following in his commentary on 2 Peter 1; 2, 3, pp. 304, 305:

In verse 2 Peter wishes for **grace (help) and peace to be granted to his readers by means of a full knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord**. That is interesting and most instructive. Here is a clear example of 1) the relationship between doctrine and life; 2) the fact that revelation is the means of conveying grace and peace. Coming to know God and (perhaps "even") Jesus Christ more fully means that grace and peace will be **increasingly** conveyed to those who attain more and more to this **knowledge**. Though the point is made again and again in the Bible in a variety of ways, it is of use to mention it once more: Scriptural revelation about God as He is made known in His Son Jesus Christ the Word is what enables a counselee to receive increasingly more help (grace) and the peace to carry him through the difficulties he must face. It is safe to say that if counseling consisted of nothing more or less than conveying and receiving more and more of that full knowledge of God that is revealed in the Scriptures, understood in terms of His relationship to the counselee and his problems, that would be all that is needed. And in one sense, that is what biblical counseling really is all about. In all that we do in counseling, both the goal and the method is to come to know God better. That knowledge consists of intellectually understood truth ministered from the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit that is applied experientially to the life of the believer.

And that is also the impact of verse 3 in which Peter writes: **Since His divine power has given us everything for life and godliness through the full knowledge of the One Who called us by His own glory and might**. For believers to come into the

possession and enjoyment of eternal **life** (so as to begin to realize it in this world) required **divine power**. Nothing short of the manifestation and application of God's **power** could regenerate and justify guilty and corrupt sinners. And nothing short of the same **power** released through the **full knowledge** of God granted in the Bible could produce godliness. But that is precisely what God, in His great mercy, has provided. **Everything** necessary for life and godliness (a life that is properly related to God) has been **given**. And there is no doubt about this fact because it has been given through the **full knowledge** (revelation) of that **One Who called us by His own glory and might**. When God effectively called Christians to become His children He provided all they would ever need in terms of vital information to live the godly life that He requires of them. That is important for an understanding of the doctrine of the sufficiency of the Bible in counseling.

To conclude, I'd like to simply cite the following verses under two words as headings.

2 Peter 1:2 – Knowledge

2 Peter 1:8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful **in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ**.

2 Peter 2:20 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through **the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

2 Peter 3:18 But grow in grace, and in **the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

2 Peter 1:3 – All

Romans 8:32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also **freely give us all things**?

1 Corinthians 3:21, 23 Therefore let no man glory in men. For **all things are yours**; (23) and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

1 Timothy 4:8 For bodily exercise profiteth little: but **godliness is profitable unto all things**, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

These verses are cited in order to shed more biblical light and perspective on the two words highlighted (*Knowledge* and *All*) in the text under consideration.

It cannot be anymore clear that what God gave us is all we need.

There are two more verses that really emphasize the "**all**" we have contained in Scripture. Both are promises given by Christ to the apostles (the human instruments used by the Holy Spirit in the revelation process) regarding revelation they will receive – and which in turn will make up the remaining inscripturated truth of the Canon.

As you read each verse, again, notice the conclusive, comprehensive and sufficient term – "**all**".

Nothing was left out of this provision by God to man!

John 14:26 *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you **all** things, and bring **all** things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*

John 16:13 *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into **all** truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.*

The Completeness of God's Revelation

At this point, I want to deal with another issue that is clearly related to sufficiency, that being completeness.

Some may agree that we have a sufficient book but in some act of twisted logic still believe we can still get more apart from and outside of Scripture. The short answer to the question "Is God still speaking today?" is No!

The following quote is from Charismatic Chaos by John MacArthur, pp.60, 61, 62.

The Canon is Closed

The truth is, there is no fresher or more intimate revelation than Scripture. God doesn't need to give us private revelation to help us in our walk with Him. "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17, emphasis added). Scripture is sufficient. It offers all we need for every good work.

Christians on both sides of the charismatic fence must realize a vital truth: God's revelation is complete for now. The canon of Scripture is closed. As the apostle John penned the final words of the last book of the New Testament, he recorded this warning: "I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book" (Rev. 22:18-19). Then, the Holy Spirit added a doxology and closed the canon.

When the canon closed on the Old Testament after the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, there followed four hundred "silent years" when no prophet spoke God's revelation in any form.

That silence was broken by John the Baptist as God spoke once more prior to the New Testament age. God then moved various men to record the books of the New Testament, and the last of these was Revelation. By the second century A.D., the complete canon exactly as we have it today was popularly recognized. Church councils in the fourth century verified and made official what the church has universally affirmed, that the sixty-six books in our Bibles are the only true Scripture inspired by God. The canon is complete.

Just as the close of the Old Testament canon was followed by silence, so the close of the New Testament has been followed by the utter absence of new revelation in any form. Since the book of Revelation was completed, no new written or verbal prophecy has ever been universally recognized by Christians as divine truth from God.

How the Biblical Canon Was Chosen and Closed

Jude 3 is a crucial passage on the completeness of our Bibles. This statement, penned by Jude before the New Testament was complete, nevertheless looked forward to the completion of the entire canon: “Beloved, while I was making every effort to write to you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). In the Greek text the definite article preceding “faith” points to the one and only faith: “the faith.” There is no other. Such passages as Galatians 1:23 (“He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith”) and I Timothy 4:1 (“In latter times some will fall away from the faith”) indicate this objective use of the expression “the faith” was common in apostolic times. Greek scholar Henry Alford wrote that the faith is “objective here: the sum of that which Christians believe.”³⁰

30. Henry Alford, Alford’s Greek New Testament, vol.IV (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 530.

Note also the crucial phrase “once for all” in Jude 3. The Greek word here is hapax, which refers to something done for all time, with lasting results, never needing repetition. Nothing need to be added to the faith that has been delivered “once for all.”

George Lawlor, who has written an excellent work on Jude, made the following comment:

The Christian faith is unchangeable, which is not to say that men and women of every generation do not need to find it, experience it and live it; but it does mean that every new doctrine that arises, even though its legitimacy may be plausibly asserted, is a false doctrine. All claims to convey some additional revelation to that which has been given by God in this body of truth are false claims and must be rejected.³¹

31. George L. Lawlor, Translation and Exposition of the Epistle Jude (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1972), 45.

Also important in Jude 3 is the word “delivered.” In the Greek it is an aorist passive participle, which in this context indicates an act completed in the past with no continuing element. In this instance the passive voice means the faith was not discovered by men, but given to men by God. How did He do that? Through His Word – the Bible.

And so through the Scriptures God has given us a body of teaching that is final and complete. Our Christian faith rests on historical, objective revelation. That rules out all inspired prophecies, seers, and other forms of new revelation until God speaks again at the return of Christ (cf. Acts 2:16-21; Rev. 11:1-13).

In the meantime, Scripture warns us to be wary of false prophets. Jesus said that in our age “false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible even the elect (Mat. 24:24). Signs and wonders alone are no proof that a person speaks for God. John wrote, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit,

but test the spirits, to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

Ultimately, Scripture is the test of everything; it is the Christian’s standards. In fact, the word canon means “a rule, standard, or measuring rod.” The canon of Scripture is the measuring rod of the Christian faith, and it is complete.

There are no more signs, visions, dreams, revelations, words of knowledge as a means of divine communication. The word is *once for all* delivered.

Examples of Sufficiency Violations

A “God-Told-Me” Story

An evangelist told a story in our church. He had a neighbor to whom he had witnessed. As I remember, he was going to see him one night and said, “God told me He was going to save this man.” Now, if that statement is true, what is the difference in Oral Roberts saying God told him something and this evangelist saying God told him something? Both are extra-biblical revelation. Can we condemn the charismatics for that kind of language, but pass it over if our fundamentalist brethren say the same thing?

One of the many problems with this kind of language, and the belief behind the language, is that it cannot be “tested” by Scripture. If something is said and the statement begins with “God told me” or “God says,” then it must be able to pass the test of the Bible – the place God said He has revealed His will. To say “God said...” and it not be able to pass the test of Scripture is to place one’s experience above the authority of the Scripture. This is one of the dangers and flaws in mysticism. Mysticism takes an experience and reasons back to Scripture rather than beginning with Scripture and using accurate theology to think about or “test” my experience. God has spoken finally and fully and sufficiently through His Word. We cannot claim to get more revelation. God speaks to me through His Word, period. In other words, there is no more revelation being given today. The sign gifts by which God revealed Himself to man are ceased. The canon of Scripture is closed.

This “God told me” mentality is setting up a non-biblical standard of authority. It creates a vehicle for one’s epistemology (source of truth or how does one propose to know what he knows) other than the objective, propositional truth of God. He approaches the word mystically (there is truth outside the Word) rather than presupposition ally (assuming all God wants the individual to know about Him and His will is contained in His Word). One’s experience does not establish propositional truth. Only God does that in his Word.

Recently a story was told about a bible college student who walked out into several lanes of traffic for no apparent reason. She was unharmed, but caused a six-car pile-up. When asked why she did that her reply was, “God told me to.” I think we would all agree that God had nothing to do with that. But suppose the results of the story were changed a little, how many would say “amen.” For example, if she had walked out into the same traffic, stopped six cars with no one getting hurt, passed out Gospel tracts to all six cars while leading two people to Christ, all on the basis of “God told her to.” Would we think

differently about the extra-biblical nature of why she did it? In other words, would the “good” result justify her actions and lend credibility to her claim to have received a message from God?

If we would disagree with the first version of the illustration (which is what really happened) but agree with the second, then does that not make us pragmatic mystics?

A Charismatic Experience – Oral Roberts

The following quote is from *Charismatic Chaos*, by John MacArthur p. 47-49.

“God told me...” has become the anthem of the charismatic movement. Strange private prophecies are proclaimed by all kinds of people who evidently believe God speaks to them. Surely the most infamous is Oral Roberts’ preposterous death-threat prophecy. Roberts told his nationwide audience in 1987 that God had threatened to “call him home” if he couldn’t raise eight million dollars by his creditors’ deadline. Whether and how that threat might have been carried out, the world will never know; Roberts received a last-minute reprieve in the form of a large check from a Florida dog-track owner.

Even so, two years later, when Roberts was forced to close his multimillion-dollar Tulsa-based City of Faith medical center, he asked God why. Roberts maintains that God gave him an answer:

God said in my spirit, “I had you build the City of Faith large enough to capture the imagination of the entire world about the merging of My healing streams of prayer and medicine. I did not want this revelation localized in Tulsa, however. And the time has come when I want this concept of merging My healing streams to be known to all people and to go into all future generations.”

As clearly in my spirit as I’ve ever heard Him, the Lord gave me an impression. “You and you partners have merged prayer and medicine for the entire world, for the church world and for all generations,” He said, “It is done.”

I then asked “Is that why after eight years you’re having us close the hospital and after 11 years the medical school?”

He said “Yes, the mission has been accomplished in the same way that after the three years of public ministry My Son said on the cross, ‘Father, it is finished.’”¹

We may gasp at Oral Roberts’ hubris, but he is not the only charismatic who thinks he is receiving private revelation from God. Most charismatics at one time or another feel that God speaks to them in some specific manner, either through an audible voice, an internal impression, a vision, or simply by using them as a vehicle to write a song, compose, a poem, or utter a prophecy.

1. Oral Roberts: Victory Out of Defeat, *Charisma* (December 1989), 88.

And Larry Lea, popular charismatic author and pastor, wrote:

Recently, when I was in Chicago preparing to preach, the Lord’s Spirit came upon me. He spoke in my heart: “I’m going to tell you now the name of the strongman over

the nation.” I listened intently. “The spiritual Strongman you are facing – the demonic strongman that has your nation under his control – Is the strongman of greed.” We certainly don’t have to look very long to find evidence to back up this Word of the Lord.⁵

5. “The Strongman of Greed,” *Charisma* (March 1991), 40 (italics in original).

Dream Examples

A friend of mine said someone asked him to help him interpret a dream. The man dreamed an animal ran into a hole and wanted to know if that had anything to do with his job search...he wanted to know what God was saying.

In a foreign country I was asked by a man: “If a girl tells me she wants to marry me because God told her to do so in one of her dreams – must I obey her?”

Experience Trumps Everything

The following quote is from *Charismatic Chaos*, by John MacArthur p. 23.

A woman wrote to me, seething, “You resort to Greek translations and fancy words to explain away what the Holy Spirit is doing in the church today. Let me give you a piece of advice that might just save you from the wrath of almighty God: put away your Bible and your books and stop studying. Ask the Holy Ghost to come upon you and give you the gift of tongues. You have no right to question something you have never experienced.”

A radio listener, after hearing my teaching on 1 Corinthians 12-14, wrote, “You people, and especially ministers of the Gospel, who claim that speaking in tongues is not for today are, in my opinion and all those who do, grieving the Holy Spirit and missing a blessing from God. To me – It is as ridiculous as if an unsaved person tried to persuade you that you absolutely cannot be sure that you will enter heaven...If you haven’t experienced it – you can NOT tell someone who HAS that it doesn’t exist.”

Both of those letters reflect the tendency to gauge truth by personal experience rather than Scripture. There is little doubt that most charismatics, if they are honest with themselves, would have to acknowledge that personal experience – and not Scripture – Is the foundation of their belief system. As much as some charismatics might want to give the Bible a high place of authority in their lives, the Scriptures too often rank second to experience in defining what they believe. As one writer puts it, “Experiences with God provide a basis for their faith.”¹

1. Gordon L. Anderson, *Pentecostals Believe in more Than Tongues*,” in Harold B. Smith, ed, *Pentecostals from the Inside Out* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1990), 55.

An Unclosed Canon

The following quote is from *Charismatic Chaos*, by John MacArthur p. 53, 54.

Dewey Beegle believes the canon of Scripture has never been closed.¹⁴ He has written, “The revelation and inspiration of God’s Spirit continues...For this reason there is no basis in considering all of the biblical writers and editors as qualitatively different from post- canonical interpreters.”¹⁵ He continues, “If the church had a more dynamic sense

of God's inspiration in the twentieth century, it would be more effective in its witness and outreach. It is well and good to protect the distinctiveness of the Bible, but to think only in terms of its inspiration as absolutely different in kind from inspiration in our time is too high a price to pay. Christians today need to have the same sense of being God-motivated and God-sent as did the biblical writers and interpreters. In a genuine sense, the difficulty of interpreting God's record of revelation to this complex age requires as much of God's inbreathing and wisdom as did the process of interpretation in the biblical periods.¹⁶

In effect, that is precisely what charismatics believe. The truth however, is that there is no way to "protect the distinctiveness of the Bible" if God is inspiring new revelation today. If the canon is still open, and if God is still giving new prophecies, new songs, and new words of wisdom, we should be earnestly seeking to compile and study these most recent revelations along with Scripture – and maybe even more diligently, since they speak expressly to our time and culture.

Some charismatics actually reason that way.¹⁷ But it is error of the worst kind. The canon is not still open. God's Word, made of the Old and New Testaments, is one unique miracle. It came together over a period of fifteen hundred years. More than forty men of God, prophets and apostles, wrote God's words – every jot and tittle – without error and in perfect harmony. No hymn is worthy to be compared to Scriptures. No modern prophecy or word of wisdom is even in the same realm with God's eternal Word. Heaven and earth will pass away; God's Word will abide (Matt. 5:18).

14. Dewey Beegle, *Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 308.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.* 309.

17. A recent Charisma article recommended this: "To meditate on our personal prophecies, we should record them if at all possible. If someone approaches us saying he or she has a word from God, we should ask the person to write it down. If the word comes from someone on the platform during a meeting that is not being recorded, we must try to write down as much as possible, getting at least the main points." [Bill Hamon, "How to Receive a Personal Prophecy," *Charisma*, (April 1991), 66.]

Guidance and Decision Making

A misunderstanding of this subject has been, in part, due to the belief that guidance is available apart from Scripture.

We will look at misunderstood and consequentially, misused texts.

One: Leading

Leading: "led by the Spirit" equals guided by the Spirit in decision-making.

Romans 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

This passage has nothing to do with decision-making or extra-biblical criteria. Rather the question in view is sanctification; walking in righteous paths by the Spirit's strength. It deals with the re-patterning of life by the Spirit (Christ in the believer) who has set us free from slavery to the old patterns. Verse 13 speaks of the power through which the believer mortifies sin. This supplies the context for verse 14; being the believer's sanctification and growth.

Romans 8:1-4 *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. (3) For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (4) That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

To be led by the Spirit and to walk after the Spirit present the same idea: To be under the government of the Spirit. The word “walk” in verse 4 means “to order one’s behaviors or conduct.” “After”, the root of this word is **down** and it suggests dominion. He orders his life in a way that is dominated by the Holy Spirit (which is synonymous with Scripture – **Colossians 3:16** and **Ephesians 5:18**).

Contexts are the same:

One: Filled with the Word

Two: Filled with the Spirit

Galatians 5:18 *But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.*

Being led by the Spirit should be understood not as being lead apart from, but rather by means of the Scriptures. Again, this passage is not a “**decision-making**” passage. Paul is dealing with a **contrast**: 1) Living under the legal dictates of the law. 2) Life under the freedom and power of the Holy Spirit. It is a life orientation that Paul is dealing with, not how the Spirit mystically “leads a person” to become a truck driver, etc. **Galatians 5:18, 22-23, 25** give the context of “walking in” and “being led” by the Spirit, not decision making. This passage refers to obedience and a fruitful Christian life.

Is it then wrong to say: “The Lord led or is leading?”

Yes, if your idea is He mystically told me to stop my car and go to this house, knock on the door and witness.

No, if you mean His leadership after using the means and resources (input data, counsel, Scripture, impact on your options, etc.) He has made available.

Two: Peace

Peace: “rule” means to be the umpire.

Colossians 3:15 *And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*

The context deals with attitudes and emotions that would cause strife. It encourages a cooperative relationship among believers. Let God’s peace be the controlling factor in your heart as you live and interact with others in the church. Your goal is to do what you do with the goal of corporate peace in mind – not peace at all costs.

Colossians 3:8 *But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.*

Christ has given us the “*put on*” to deal with these sinful practices, passions, and motives. Consider the following text.

Colossians 3:12-14 *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; (13) Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. (14) And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*

If all these directives are followed, the result will be peace within yourself and in the body of believers (local church). The following passage in **Ephesians 4** parallels **Colossians 3:8-14**.

Ephesians 4:1-6 *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, (2) With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; (3) Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (4) There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; (5) One Lord, one faith, one baptism, (6) One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

*“It has to do with love and getting along with other Christians as members of the body of Christ (**Colossians 3:12-14**). When all is said and done, Paul writes, in the final analysis you must let the principle of peace among the members of the body control your words and actions. There is nothing whatsoever in the passage about individual peace. Your heart (the place you think about such matters, and the source of your words and actions) is to be influenced by considerations of what will bring about and maintain peace among the members of the body.” J. Adams.*

Even if this passage was dealing specifically with personal peace or individual peace, it would still not be for guidance and decision making.

Using the Scriptures for the purpose the Holy Spirit wrote them is one of the most important principles of Hermeneutics.

Three: Signs, Experiences

Put out fleece.

Judges 6:36-40 *And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, (37) **Behold, I will put a fleece of wool** in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said. (38) And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water. (39) And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: **let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece**; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. (40) And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.*

This was actually tempting God because God had already spoken via his Word in verse 14.

Judges 6:14 *And the LORD looked upon him, and said, **Go in this thy might**, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?*

Gideon was **disobedient!**

How does verse 14 convince us that “putting out the fleece” is not a legitimate way to determine God’s will? God had already clearly communicated His will to Gideon.

So many people **abuse** this story and think it is legitimate to use for determining God’s will.

How is the fleece principle sometimes employed?

- If I go to this interview and the receptionist smiles and nods approvingly I’ll know I’ve got the job or should take it.
- I’ll know I should join such and such a committee, team, group if this and that happens.
- Reading the tea leaves, Tarot cards etc.

You say, “That’s demonic!”...Yes it is. But we have our own style of Tarot cards as one tries to “divine” God’s will.

There are no biblical grounds for thinking this way.

The story of Eliezer (Genesis 24:12-14) is an excellent illustration of “putting out the fleece” in a legitimate way.

- In the Old Testament and early New Testament God did still speak via these types of methods. (Hebrews 1:1).
- God had not yet told Eliezer the answer.
- Scripture had not been completed. The canon was still open.

Basic hermeneutics are important!

Why would Eliezer’s method be legitimate in the Old Testament and not in the New Testament?

Your answer to this question will be a telltale indication of your theological grasp of the sufficiency of the Scriptures and possible charismatic tendencies. It will also be an indicator of your grasp of systematic theology, progressive revelation and sound hermeneutics.

These examples should suffice to demonstrate how the doctrines of sufficiency and completeness are being violated today.

Because the Scriptures are sufficient and complete...

- You can have complete confidence in them for personal growth and change.
- You need go nowhere else to get answers to equip yourself to minister to God’s people.

- You can minister in hope.
- You can hold people accountable for obedience to God's truth knowing it's all we have and need.
- You can go to them for any need for yourself and/or others.

Sample

Appendix One

Why The Doctrine of Biblical Sufficiency and Exclusivity is So Crucial

1. There is only one voice of God – the Scriptures.
2. Neither man's redemption from sin's penalty nor his progressive growth from sin's enslavement come from within. Man is not capable of either in and of himself. Something has to come to man from the outside. God, His Word, and the Holy Spirit all must invade and persuasively take over a man for salvation and/or sanctification to occur. There is no such thing as "self help." Man does not have the means to attain what he totally needs – forgiveness from sin and the capacity to know and glorify God. God didn't leave man empty-handed to handle life on his own after redemption.
3. Man needed and was dependent on God's voice, His Word, prior to the fall (Genesis 1:28-30; 2:15-17). The point is, if man, in his state of sinlessness needed it, how much more we. The implications to "Scripture is not sufficient" are:
 - a. Where is the rest of what we need?
 - b. How do we go about getting it, verifying it, etc?
 - c. How would we know if we finally got it?
 - d. Why would a good God leave His children to flounder, wander and otherwise be ill-equipped to live life?
4. Unredeemed man, pop psychology, etc. has no necessary connection to nor can make any necessary contribution to man's justification and/or progressive sanctification! (1 Corinthians 2:14; Romans 3:11; Romans 8:8)
5. Even man's redeemed mind must be totally reconstructed (Ephesians 4:23; 2 Corinthians 10:5).
6. The impact of the fall on the mind of man, his ability to think, reason, etc, spiritually has not only been damaged but completely and utterly destroyed (Romans 3:11; noetic effect of sin).
7. The Charismatics claim, promote and build their lives on an "open and continuing revelation" (Jude 3).
8. Man is naturally feeling oriented and therefore has tendencies toward subjective, mystical feelings, hunches, impressions, senses, etc. We must have an objective word that is settled. There is no way to test a feeling, inner voice, still small voice, urge, sensation, impression, etc. Man wants to relate to God this way.
9. It must be understood that God has communicated via objective, propositional truth. If we're not committed to this fact – then who knows where truth is, if we have truth, if we have all the truth, how to tell if someone speaks the truth.

- 10.** No one has the right to impose his opinion on someone else or to form an opinion about God, spiritual life, etc. on his own. That is arrogance and pride. There must be a standard, rule, and yardstick. Who has the right to say “I know how you should live and what you should do.”? Only God has this right and it is established in the Scriptures.
- 11.** The mind of man contrives all kinds of substitutes for an insufficient book – his own ideas, twisted Scripture, etc.
- 12.** Since God’s only voice is His written Word, there is no way to know God’s will and perceive His guidance apart from Scripture. If Scripture is not sufficient then I really have no idea what God wants me to do, how to live, etc.
- 13.** It is the anchor of hope for all God’s people in general and His ministers in particular (Romans 15:4).
- 14.** It is the means whereby we demonstrate our love to God (John 14:15). It must be complete and objective for us to be able to love Him. If not, He has asked us to do something we can’t do because there may be more to come that we don’t have yet. Therefore our love is incomplete.
- 15.** If it is not complete, it implies a variety of options to which you can go to get the rest and that choice is yours. There is only one pond we need to fish out of – God’s Word.
- 16.** It protects God’s reputation. God “gets blamed” for lots of stuff. But His person and work are revealed only in the Scriptures.
- 17.** It protects the doctrine of justification and sanctification. Because all we need for both are contained in the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:2-3).
- 18.** It protects the doctrine of ecclesiology – what is the church to be and do (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20; Acts 1). With an open canon who knows really the answer to this question or any question for that matter. If all has not been said, then who knows what else could be, might be and probably will be said?
- 19.** It protects every doctrine of the Bible. Again, if all hasn’t been said then how and when will any doctrine get tweaked, changed, adjusted etc.?
- 20.** It guards God’s integrity regarding His supplying His people with the needed instruction and resources.
- 21.** Protects the church against all kinds of ideas, weird theologies, teachings, etc.

Appendix Two

For the Explanation of Mysticism

This is an extensive quote from *Faith Misguided*, pp. 27-32.

It seems that for some, this “sense of authority” is so compelling that they insist that there is no possibility that they are mistaken in what they have come to believe. It is this compelling sense of the truth that I refer to as the self authenticating nature of the mystical experience. It is from these “noetic qualities” that much of the theology of the new religions is derived.

A further curious aspect related to the noetic quality of the experience is the argument one often encounters when challenging a mystic. He may argue that since the non-mystic has not had the experience he has had, the non-mystic is therefore not qualified to sit in judgment on it. One often hears the claim that “I just know,” with a refusal to further discuss or defend the issue.

If we ask the religious mystic what the source of this claimed knowledge is, and what it is knowledge of, he will answer that it is knowledge of God, or of some aspect of his will, and that its source is God Himself. In other words, the mystic claims, either openly or by implication, that God has revealed Himself to the mystic, or else He has revealed some new, vital information. If it was God’s self-revelation, doctrine can be developed from it. Otherwise, the teaching itself is said to be directly from God. Either way, the religious mystic claims to have experienced God and to have received special revelations.

How are we to react to the mystic’s claims? A series of rather significant issues must be confronted if evangelical Christians are to see their way clearly in dealing with these claims.

For convenience I will divide these issues into two groups. First, there are problems that result from the actual phenomenon of mysticism. These difficulties are theoretical, but they are also significant for the evangelical Christian since they relate directly to certain basic Christian doctrines. Second, there are problems that result from the nature of the revelations the mystic claims to have received. Here the central issue is specific doctrines derived from mystical experiences. Among these is the doctrine of God.

It is vitally important that we clearly understand both groups of problems, lest we be caught in that trap that allows us to accept a false principle because the specific application of that principle seems to be legitimate. For example, suppose we find a person who claims to have gained, by means of a mystical experience, a specific bit of information that we happen to know to be true. Does the truth of the information prove that mystical experience is a valid means of gaining knowledge? Of course it does not. The fact that one piece of information is true does not prove that the means by which it was discovered will always (or even usually) provide true information. It may be totally accidental that the mystical experience yields valid information.

The first issues that need to be examined result from the mystic’s claim to have gained truth. Two factors, one largely philosophical and the other doctrinal, both closely related,

demand consideration. What is the criterion by which we determine truth? Or, stated in other terms, When is a statement true? And, by what standard do we determine that it is true? This is the philosophical issue.

The doctrinal problems grow [sic] out of it. Evangelical Christians maintain that the Bible is the only standard for faith and practice – the only and ultimate criterion in all matters concerning our spiritual life (2 Peter 1:2-4; 2 Timothy 3:16). If this is so, is there any place for such extra biblical sources of knowledge as mystical experiences in the Christian's life?

A closely related issue concerns whether or not God's special revelation to man is complete in the Scriptures. Most Protestant Christians, until recently, have always believed and taught that it is. While there is no Scriptural passage that explicitly states this, Biblical scholars have long maintained that there is strong implicit evidence in the Word that direct revelation was to cease with the death of those who were eye-witnesses of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. It seems quite significant that most, if not all, claims to direct revelations made by self-proclaimed prophets since the close of the canon have resulted in serious problems for the church. They have also been the source of many major heresies.

If God's special revelation to man is complete in the Scripture, then the mystics claim to direct revelation must be rejected. This applies not only when it conflicts with biblical teaching, but also when it claims to be in line with the Word but goes beyond what the Bible teaches. All that we need to know is either already directly contained in the written Word or is implied by what it says; or else it is revealed in and through God's general revelation, His creation. To claim a further revelation is to deny the sufficiency and completeness of what has already been given.

If, however, a supposed revelation neither conflicts with, nor adds to, what it is already revealed, it is then no real revelation. This is so because nothing is being revealed that is not already known, and there is no need for it. Thus, in either case, a claim to new revelation must be rejected, either as conflicting with God's Word or as being superfluous. But such a "revelation" is never only superfluous, because if accepted as a revelation it makes legitimate the claim that new special revelations are possible, and therefore potentially valid.

The evangelical Christian, then, must reject the mystic's claim to direct revelation from God for several reasons, some of which we will examine later. But at this point, he must do so primarily because it, in effect, results in the position that there is at least one other way, beside through Scripture, of gaining knowledge of God.

Thus far we have been discussing the doctrinal issues. We must also understand what it means when we say that the Scriptures are the final criterion of truth. The Christians response to the philosophical question is that in matters relating to spiritual issues, the Bible is the final criterion of truth and the standard by which truth claims are tested in other areas as well. The mystic, however, proposes another criterion, although this is generally done, more by implication and practice than by explicit statement. For him, inner, nonrational experience is the ultimate criterion. There is something about the experience that sets it apart, putting it above question. In some cases, the intensity of

the experience seems to be what makes it self-authenticating. The experience convinces the mystic in such a way, and to such a degree, that he simply cannot doubt its value and the correctness of what he believes it "says."

However, another element of quite recent origin seems prevalent in at least some cases. In its crudest form this position says that believing something to be so makes it so. The idea is that ultimate reality is purely mental; therefore one is able to create whatever reality one wishes. Thus the mystic "creates" truth through his own experience. In a less extreme form, the view seems to be that there are "alternate realities," one as real as another, and that these "break in upon" the mystic in his experiences. Whatever form is taken, the criterion of truth is again a purely private and subjective experience that provides no means of verification and no safeguard against error. Nevertheless, it is seen by the mystic as being above question by others.

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