

## **“BATTLE FOR THE BIBLE: SUFFICIENCY”**

The Bible is under attack today on many fronts. But this “war on the Word” is not new. It began after God first spoke to man in the dawn of time in the garden of Eden. It started when Satan asked mother Eve, “*Hath God said...?*” In other words, Did God really say what you think He did? Does it even matter what God said? Here’s a tree that can do all kinds of things for you, and God is withholding that knowledge. Why, surely you don’t believe what God said! Surely there is more to it than what you’ve been told... You know, Satan still plants that seed of doubt and skepticism in the hearts of men and women today. In our last study in this series, we talked about the devil’s attack on the credibility and inspiration of the scriptures. Multiplied millions of people who claim to believe in God may even believe that the Bible is a holy book. But they don’t believe what the Bible claims about its own authorship when you get right down to it. That is, that the Bible is a divinely inspired book, carefully written by men who were superintended and perfectly guided by the Spirit of God as they wrote. Now, that has incredible consequences for how we look at the Bible, what we believe, how we worship, how we live and ultimately, where we’ll spend eternity. The fact is, if the Bible is NOT the inspired Word of God, then it cannot be trusted. Why? Because, first of all, it would be human in origin. Secondly, because it claims to be the divinely inspired Word of God. So, if it is not that, then its writers were either deluded or dishonest because they claimed their words were the result of the Holy Spirit’s guidance and careful revelation and inspiration.

**II Timothy 3:16-17 “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”**

That means that every scripture is the breath of God, or *as God spoke it*. And it was given for these purposes, and is able to do what it was intended to do. Therefore, we can live in the will of God because of what is provided for us within the scriptures. So, are the scriptures sufficient, or do we need something besides or in addition to them, to know the truth and live righteously? Paul affirms, as we studied last week, that the scriptures are credible. They came by inspiration of God. So, our question today is, are they sufficient?

Solomon said, “Of the making of books, there is no end.” The world is full of volumes and volumes that have been written about spirituality and Christianity. Massive libraries are filled over and over with books about God, the Bible, the church, and about every religious matter that you can conceive of. Some of those books are informative, and some of them are very resourceful and helpful to us. But what’s truly amazing is that all of those volumes were in some way or to some extent spawned from this one book, the Bible. In other words, it was the revelation of this book that prompted the author, whether he is right or wrong, to write what he did. Many of those books are *inspired* by this book, the Bible. And there is not one single one of those books that contains one single line of truth that is not taught within the Bible. What that means is that as useful and helpful as some of those books may be,

they won't lead you to God. Anything within them and them alone that teaches truth comes from the Bible, because Jesus rightly said, in His prayer to the heavenly Father, recorded in **John 17:17**:

**"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."**

In the text for our study (**II Timothy 3:16-17**), Paul tells us that "*all scripture is given by inspiration,*" and that it is given to teach us, to reprove us, to correct us and to instruct us in righteousness. He says that the result is that through learning the scriptures, a man can become "*perfect.*" That word, when used in the Bible, doesn't mean sinless, rather it means *complete*. So, a man can become complete, equipped, and furnished to every good work. Notice that Paul didn't say that the Word of God equips him to *some* good works, but to *every* good work. What that means is that if it is not furnished by the scriptures, then it's not a good work. That is a lesson that multiplied millions of people in religion need to understand today.

The Bible tells us in the parable of the sower (**Matthew 13, Luke 8**) that Satan works to take the Word of God out of man's heart. Well, this is surely one of the ways he does so: by undermining the sufficiency of the scriptures. I have pointed out over and over again in our studies together that the Word of God will produce a Christian and a Christian ONLY. But, the sad, divided state of Christendom tells us something about men's attitudes toward the Bible. My friend, the Bible alone does not result in hundreds of denominations and divided churches. It takes the Bible being deluded, perverted or amended by the doctrines of men in order to produce the mess that we have in religion today. You see, the Bible doesn't divide Christians. Creeds of men divide men. Yet, we see innumerable divisions in religion today, partly because we're not beginning at the same starting point. That is, a respect for the inspiration, the authority and the all-sufficiency of the Word of God.

First of all, I'd like to suggest that there is a battle over the sufficiency of the Bible today when it comes to the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion and sanctification. Now, the Holy Spirit is not only the Spirit of the living God, He is vital to spiritual life. The fact is, we would know nothing of the mind and will of God if it were not for the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is the animating force of the church, and Paul plainly said, in **Romans 8:8,9,14**:

**"So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his...For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."**

So, we're told that the Christian must be led by the spirit of God in order to be a child of God. There's no debate about that, for anybody who believes what the Bible says. The question is, how does the Holy Spirit lead us? How is a person led by the Spirit to a saving knowledge of Christ and to a life of sanctification? Is it by some intuition? Is it some abstract process by which a person is led to the truth? Well, remember, the Spirit of God is the illuminating source of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit guided the minds and pens of the apostles and prophets to reveal the Word of God to us. What that means is that when I pick up and read and understand and apply the Bible, I am reading what the Holy Spirit inspired men to write down and thus, I am allowing the Holy Spirit, through what He has revealed,

to transform me into the image of Christ. Remember, Paul said, “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God...*” (**II Timothy 3:16**). Paul also said the following:

**I Corinthians 2:12-13 “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. 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.”**

Paul is telling us that the Spirit of God illumined the hearts of the apostles and guided them as they spoke the things that became the written New Testament. Sometimes we use a figure of speech called metonymy, which is where we name one thing to suggest another. One type of metonymy is the metonymy of ‘cause for the effect.’ We name the cause of something to suggest the effect or vice versa. If the Spirit of God revealed the Word, then couldn’t we say that when we follow the Word, that we’re following the Spirit? If the Holy Spirit revealed God’s will through the Word, then when we say we’re following the Spirit, wouldn’t that mean that we’re following the Word of the Spirit? Now, that doesn’t mean that the Word AND the Spirit are the same. Absolutely, they are NOT. The Spirit is a divine being. But it means that one is the medium of the other. The Spirit spoke to the church through the Word, and the Word is the product of what the Spirit spoke. That simply means that if I want to be led by the Spirit of God, then I need to read and obey what the Spirit revealed through the apostles.

So many people think that the Bible only goes so far, and that we must have an extra biblical revelation of the Spirit, or they believe that the Bible is a mystery to us, until the Holy Spirit comes and personally performs a direct operation on the heart and in essence opens our understanding and interprets and applies it within our lives. In other words, that a person cannot understand and obey what the Holy Spirit revealed until that person receives an abstract, personal operation of the Holy Spirit to help him understand the Word of God. First of all, the Bible doesn’t teach that. If the Holy Spirit gave the Word, what sense does it make that the Spirit has to come back to explain the Word? What’s necessary to understand the scripture is an honest heart. That’s what the Bible teaches, in the parable of the sower.

Consider this: what do you do in a situation where you have two people who both claim to be led by the Holy Spirit, who come up with two contradictory things? For example, there are people who claim that the Holy Spirit leads them to understand the Bible, and those people believe in a millennial reign of Jesus after a rapture and period of tribulation on the earth; that He’s going to come and reign from the city of Jerusalem in a thousand year reign on the earth. Yet, you have others who also claim to be led by the Spirit, who say that Jesus is reigning now, in His kingdom from heaven, His spiritual kingdom. Which one is right? Well, you say, the Bible is right. That’s right. The Bible settles the issue, that’s correct. But, if we are individually and specially led by the Spirit to understand the Bible, my question is, which one of the people we just talked about is being led by the Spirit to a correct understanding?

What about those who claim to be personally led by the Holy Spirit who believe that a Christian cannot fall from grace and be lost? But then, you have others who say they are led by the Spirit, and they say the Christian can fall from grace and be lost. Which one is right? Friend, the Holy Spirit is right, and there’s only one way to know what the Holy Spirit has said about the issue, and that is to read and study

with an honest heart what the Spirit has already said within His Word. And as long as a person can claim the independent, abstract leading of the Holy Spirit in his knowledge of spiritual things, please consider this: what's to keep someone else from making the same claim, and affirming something opposite and attributing it to the Holy Spirit?

In the apostolic era, divinely inspired men had the power to work signs and wonders. Why is that?

**Hebrews 2:3-4 “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation: which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”**

In other words, as goes the claim, so must also go the demonstration. The Hebrew writer tells us that God bore witness of these men who were speaking by and being guided by the Spirit. How? By the working of miraculous signs. So, if you're going to claim to be personally led by the Holy Spirit beyond what has already been revealed in the scriptures, then you need to step up and prove it, in the same way that the apostles did: by healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out devils, drinking poison, being bitten by snakes, and so on and so on...

Today, I don't need to perform a miracle to prove the truth. What I need to do is produce the book, chapter and verse to prove the truth. The Holy Spirit has already spoken. The last will and testament of Jesus Christ has been revealed and written down, and the faith has been once and for all delivered to the saints.

**Jude 3 “...earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”**

The apostle Peter gave us a wonderful confidence in **II Peter 1:2-3:**

**“Grace and peace by multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:”**

Notice he says he “hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.” We're not still waiting for guidance from heaven. It's already been provided, if we'll just open it and study it with a heart to believe and obey. Satan has waged a great war against the sufficiency of the scriptures today by convincing people that they can't read and understand the Bible without some sort of operation of the Holy Spirit that you really can't define. You just feel it and somehow know that the Holy Spirit has enlightened you and helped you to understand something... You see, the problem with that is, first of all that the Bible doesn't teach it, and second of all, it launches the Bible into all kinds of uncertainty and subjectivity. You have all of these various people, all claiming to be led by the Spirit, coming up with all kinds of different and contradictory ideas. Surely, it cannot be so!

Secondly, there is a battle over the sufficiency of the Bible when it comes to the interpretations of men. What I mean by that is, some people allege that the common person cannot rightly understand and apply the spiritual truths of the Bible without the church hierarchy or clergy, as it is often called, explaining it to them. This is where the catechism of the Roman Catholic Church comes in. This is why the pope is looked at as infallible in religious matters, and as the sole arbiter of divine truth to millions of people. That's where human creeds are born, with men saying that in order for the church to be united in truth, there must be the intervention of a creed upon which we can unite. Again, the problem is, which creed do we unite upon? They all say something different. That's what makes them creeds. But they say the creed has to come from the Bible. Well, if men's creeds come only from the Bible, then why do you need creeds?

**II Timothy 3:14-15 “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; 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.”**

You see, the scriptures are able and sufficient to make us wise unto salvation. If you want to know what to do to be saved today, you don't have to wait for some special operation of the Holy Spirit. You don't have to have some church council tell you what to do to be saved, or set terms of admission into the Lord's kingdom. Friend, open your Bible. Look at the gospels. Then turn to the book of Acts where the great commission was fulfilled and the gospel was preached and where men were saved. If you'll do what they did, you'll become what they became. The scriptures are sufficient.

The list goes on. Today, we're told that the Bible alone just won't do. We're told that in order to bring the lost to Christ, we need gimmicks and games and programs and philosophies. That to do the work of Christ, we have to be on the cutting edge and innovate and change with the times. Here's the real problem. Here's where the battle for the sufficiency of the Bible is being waged today: the world today isn't looking for a faith that is revealed in the Word of God. It's looking for a faith that is derived through experience and emotion. But, Paul tells us where saving faith comes from, and might I add, the ONLY place saving faith comes from:

**Romans 10:17 “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”**

It doesn't come through the word plus experience. It doesn't come through the word plus a vision or a dream. It doesn't come through the word plus a human creed. Faith in God comes solely through the Word of God that is heard by a good and honest heart.

I want to remind you of a story that Jesus told about a careless rich man who died and went to hell. Jesus said in **Luke 16** that he was being tormented among the flames of punishment. This man could well remember the reprobate life that he had lived on earth, and he well remembered his loved ones, who were still alive and living the same kind of lives. And he looked across that great divide and saw Abraham and the beggar, Lazarus, and he had a desperate request.

**Luke 16: 27-31** “Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

Who were Moses and the prophets? The law, the prophets of the Old Testament, the Word of God. Abraham says, Let them hear the Word of God. Let them believe what has already been preached. And if they won’t listen to that, he says, nothing will save them. My friend, the Word is where it’s at. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ our Savior to a lost and dying world. Satan today, just like in the garden, says, *“Hath God said...? Don’t you know that God didn’t tell you everything there is to know about this tree? Surely you’re not going to settle for what God said way back over there...”* She believed him. She ate the forbidden fruit, and the human race was ruined. It’s the age-old battle for the Bible and its sufficiency.