

7. A Complete Word

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[0 : 00] We're going to turn to our Bible reading this morning, and if you'd like to turn with me to Peter's second letter, page 1018 in the Church Bibles, 2 Peter, and we're going to read some verses from 2 Peter chapter 1, beginning at verse 3 and then skipping forward to verse 12.

So, we're returning this morning for the last two or perhaps three occasions to the series that we were looking at sometime before Christmas on what is the Bible.

And we've already referred to this important passage, but I want to read part of it again this morning because we will focus on some of the things that Peter is very concerned to impress upon us.

So, reading then at 2 Peter in chapter 1, verse 3, God's divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness.

Or if you have an NIV, I think it says everything that we need. God has given us everything we need for life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

[1 : 38] Let's just skip forward to verse 12. Peter has said that God has given the church, the Christian community, everything that they need for life and godliness through the great and precious promises of the Scripture.

Why is he concerned with that? He's concerned with that because soon he's going to die. And soon there will be no more apostles left in the church. And therefore, he says, verse 12, I intend always to remind you of these qualities though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. And I think it's right as long as I am in this body to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me.

And I will make every effort so that after my departure, you may be able at any time to recall these things.

What is it he's wanting to remind them that they have to recall constantly after the apostles are no longer with them? Well, it is the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament.

[2 : 47] That's what he talks about here, verse 16. For we, the apostles, did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the majestic glory, this is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased, speaking about the transfiguration on the mountain, when that happened, Peter said, we ourselves heard this very voice, borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

And, we have something, perhaps rather than more sure, we have something absolutely sure, a prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Knowing this, first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation, but no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Amen. May God bless to us this, his word. Peter's talking there about drawing the church's attention back, always, to the apostolic witness to Christ, and to the witness of the prophets, that is the Old Testament.

[4 : 19] The New Testament witness, and the Old Testament witness. Everything that we need for life and godliness, until the Lord Jesus comes again. Well, perhaps turn with me, if you would, to the beginning of Peter's second letter, and we will come to that in due course.

As I said, we're going back today to this question, what is the Bible? And if you recall back to late last year, we were looking at this, and in the more recent studies, seeing a number of things about Scripture, that Scripture teaches itself.

So, we saw that it was a trustworthy word. Our Bible is divinely authored revelation. That is, the writers are inspired by God himself, but we're also told that the very words themselves are breathed out, are expired, if you like, by God's Spirit himself.

They are divine words, and therefore trustworthy words. And therefore, God's word in Scripture is a powerful word. It's a word that's living, it's active, because it carries God's authority, and it conveys God's authority to tell the world, to turn the sinner, and to tether the saint.

That's saying of Thomas Cranmer, the reformer. So, it's a trustworthy word, our Bibles. It's a powerful word. But today, I want to think further about the nature of the Bible as being a finished work, and God's final word to mankind.

[6 : 11] The Bible is a complete word, and therefore, it is a completely sufficient revelation of God to us, and a completely sufficient revelation of God for us.

Because God has spoken, finally, and fully, and completely, to mankind, in the gospel of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And that means that there cannot be, and nor should we, therefore, ever look for, a further revelation of God.

Nothing could ever surpass what he has spoken to us in these last days by his Son. That's what Hebrews 1 says that we began our service with.

To add anything, therefore, to God's revelation must be to detract from this gospel. It must be to dishonor the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Because in these last days, God has spoken to us fully and finally and completely in the revelation of his Son. And we must never, therefore, dishonor the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ by doing that.

[7 : 19] God has given us a complete word, and therefore, we have a sufficient revelation. The NIV translates verse 3 of 1 Peter 1, he has given us, his divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him.

All things that pertain to life and godliness. So I just want to be clear for a few minutes about exactly what that means. The Bible itself tells us that we have a complete witness and that we, therefore, have a sufficient word.

A complete witness, then. Let's think about that. We sometimes speak of the canon of Scripture. And by using that word canon, what we mean is that it's a closed book.

Closed, of course, not in the sense of being unreadable or that we shouldn't read it, but closed because it is complete. Because it is a totality. Because it's bound together as a whole to which nothing can be added and nothing must be subtracted.

It's a complete canon that we have. The Bible is not some sort of a work in progress. It's not like the kind of theories or thoughts of a philosopher or a thinker early on in their career.

[8 : 41] No, the thought and the teaching of the Bible is not something that is still developing. It's not something whose truth may therefore be modified or changed at a later date, but it might become different from what it currently says.

Not at all. The Bible, if you like, is God's magnum opus. It's his major work. It's the definitive deposit of his revelation. If you're an academic and you're studying some thinker or some philosopher or some theologian or whatever, you look to their completed works.

You look to their life's work at the end of their life when they put together everything that they think and you say, that is the mature, settled belief or teaching of this person.

You might look back at something that they wrote very early on in their career and chart things through their career and see how their views changed and were modified. But it's their completed works that you look to to say, well, this is the mature and the definitive view of this teaching.

Well, that is what we have in the Scripture. It is a closed canon. It's the magnum opus of God. It's the finished work. Now, that's a vital point, a vital point about the Orthodox doctrine of Scripture.

[10 : 06] But why do we say this? Why do we insist that it is a closed canon? Well, very simply, God's revelation is closed with the closing of the apostolic witness because Christ's redemption is complete.

God's revelation of himself comes to its absolute climax in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus because God's revelation to man is the revelation of God as our great God and Savior in Jesus Christ.

God's revelation comes to its climax in the salvation that is in his Son. So, Hebrews 1 again. It's very eloquent.

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. But in these last days, notice last, he has spoken to us by his Son. He goes on to say, after he had made purification for our sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

Do you see? His redemptive work is finished. After he made purification, he sat down. It's done. And so, in these last days, because Christ has completed his great redemption of his people, God has fully and finally completed his revelation of himself to human beings.

[11:37] See, it's the events of God's redemption and the explanation of those events by the prophets and the apostles, it's that that constitutes God's revelation to man.

That is, what we know of God through what he has done and through what he has told us about what he has done. And the apostolic era, through their divinely inspired words, that has completed the revelation about what God has done.

Remember some time back, we saw that in John chapters 14 to 16 where Jesus is speaking to his disciples about what would happen after his death and resurrection and his ascension.

And he said, the Spirit would come, the Spirit would be sent to remind you, the apostles, of Jesus' previous words to them and to fit them and to give them authority to be witnesses of these words for the whole New Testament church for all time, to enshrine the gospel in the church forever.

And so John, when he begins his first letter, he says, that which we have seen and heard, we proclaim also to you so that you also might have fellowship with us, that is, the apostles, and indeed, as our fellowship is with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ.

[13:01] You see, the way to fellowship with the Father and to his Son, Jesus Christ, is only through the apostolic words, through fellowship with the apostles, through the words that he, the Spirit, taught them.

That's why Jude, likewise, when he begins his letter, speaks about the faith once for all delivered to the saints. so that nothing can be added, nothing can be taken away from this complete witness.

So Paul is just as clear, isn't he, in writing to Galatians, Galatians 1.8, even if an angel from heaven should speak a contrary word to what you have received, let him be accursed.

The ones of Thessalonians in exactly the same way. People, he says, will always come along saying they're giving words of the Spirit that claim such authority, but let no one deceive you, he says. Because, because, in the gospel of Jesus Christ, in the apostolic testimony to that gospel, we have already a complete witness.

The very last chapter of the Bible, Revelation chapter 22, carries a strong warning, doesn't it, not to add anything or take anything away from this book of prophecy.

[14:19] of course, he's referring primarily to the revelation itself, but very appropriately, it refers to the whole of the apostolic witness, because the apostolic witness is foundational for the New Testament church.

Ephesians 2.20 says that explicitly, isn't it? The church is built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. I could spend much longer on this, because it is very, very important, but let me, let me summarize by quoting to you this portion from the Westminster Confession of Faith, which is on your sheets from the very first chapter.

I believe it expresses accurately what the Bible is teaching about itself. The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life is either expressly set down in Scripture or, by good and necessary consequence, may be deduced from Scripture, unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men.

Now that's, I believe, what the Scriptures of the New Testament teach about the nature of the Bible. The traditions of men that the Confession is speaking about there principally refer to the traditions and the teachings of the unreformed Roman Catholic Church.

That's the context of that confession. But it equally refers to any accretions of any sort of institutional religion at all. It's very, very easy, all too easy for the traditions of men to become the main focus and for God's Word itself to become rather sidelined.

[16:13] That was Jesus' criticism, wasn't it, of the Jews and of the religious establishment of his day. What they were really interested in was institutional matters, their religiosity, not the actual living Word of God itself.

And that's very often today exactly the same thing. People are very, very concerned with the traditions, the culture, the institutions, the great sacred kinds of their church and their way of doing things, their particular customs, their traditions.

And very easily the Bible itself in its controlling power is set aside, becomes much less important in practice. new revelations of the Spirit that the confession refers to.

Likewise, that has always been claimed in the church. We see it in the New Testament. We see it still today. One prominent way you see it today is among some Pentecostal and charismatic churches where special prophecies and words of revelation and so on are very regularly claimed. Now often, of course, what is being claimed by somebody in that context is just simply in line with something that's taught in Scripture. And so you might say, well, what's wrong with that?

[17 : 29] Can't God give specific words to people today just like that? Well, if what you mean is that you're simply applying a particular truth of Scripture to a particular situation, then of course, of course God speaks to his people in particular ways like that all the time and we must always be doing that, applying Scripture in a real way in our lives, in our decision making and so on.

And sometimes we have to recognize, sometimes it's just a different use of language in the way people express things. One person might say, well, I've been thinking through this in the light of Scripture and praying it through and I just believe that the God-honoring situation, the God-honoring thing to do is to do this.

Whereas somebody else might say, well, I'm going to do this because God has spoken to me and told me that this is what I must do. And that could just be two ways of saying essentially the same thing.

But there is a danger, isn't there, when you speak in that latter way. There's a danger that you focus more and more on your personal feelings and your personal experiences and what you think in some special way God has said to you.

And it's easy when that is the case for the Bible actually to become a bit more sidelined and for the real focus to be increasingly on something that just seems more irrelevant, seems more immediate, seems more personal than Scripture.

[19 : 02] You see, if I say, God has sent me a special message and told me to do this, it's very hard, isn't it, for somebody else to say, well, I think that's the wrong thing to do.

Because, really, you're saying, well, I'm opposed to God. And it's much more exciting, isn't it, to speak in that sort of a way.

But Scripture is full of warnings about these sorts of things, claiming revelations with the authority of God, and we need to be careful. Our hearts are deceitful, aren't they?

Haven't you ever thought that God wants you to do something largely because it's what you want to do yourself? I certainly have. And it becomes easy to convince oneself. It becomes easy to start hearing the things you want to hear and not hearing the people who have a contrary voice.

We need to be careful about claiming new revelations of the Spirit, fresh revelations. God has given us everything we need for life and godliness in the great and precious promises of the scriptures applied to our lives.

[20 : 14] Another danger, and I think this is a greater danger today, is a view that's increasingly common in the church that our theology, that our thinking about things in the church needs to actually go beyond the Bible.

That the Bible is not a closed canon. The Bible is not a complete revelation. But the Bible is rather setting a trajectory along which the church is to continue.

You usually find that when that word trajectory is used, it's quite a dangerous signal actually. But people talk about seeing the Bible setting a trajectory along which the church goes to develop and to bring on our thinking through the fresh revelation of the Spirit in the church.

So, for example, you will find it's very common in the church today for people to take these words from John 14 to 16 that Jesus spoke specifically to his apostles in the upper room about leading them into all truth, reminding them of all the words that Jesus had spoken to them.

People take those words and they apply them as though they were words spoken directly by Jesus to the church today, to us. And then they will go on and say, well, the Spirit is indeed leading us into a fresh revelation from God.

[21 : 40] The Spirit is leading us into all truth now today and is going on doing so. On the matter, for example, of human sexuality. So the Spirit is leading the church today into a fuller understanding and we're moving along a trajectory that teaches us that actually, for example, same-sex

relationships are pleasing to God.

or in interfaith thinking, the Spirit is now leading us to see that in fact, because we know so much more about the world and its religions, that there are indeed many ways to God, not just through Jesus Christ and a whole host of other things.

You see, the Spirit is leading us on a trajectory beyond Scripture. And that's the way of liberal theologians, has been for a long time, but it's also the way of many of those in what's known today as the emerging church movement, very in and trendy, particularly among young people today. The idea that the Word of God, the Scriptures, is a closed canon is anathema to these people. They love to talk rather instead about mystery and about paradox, about the unknowableness of God and his ways, and about the fact, therefore, that doctrine must be flexible, that it must be changeable, that we are in a developing situation all the time.

We're part of God's story, which is moving on, and we're writing today's chapters of that story, not just the first century. That sounds very plausible, doesn't it?

[23 : 17] It sounds very exciting to be part of God's story and moving along in that sense. Even some evangelical theologians have moved strongly, I think, in that direction, so that they can talk about the church today as having the mind of Christ, even when that mind of Christ seems to contradict the very words of Christ that were written down in the Scriptures.

Let me quote you from Christopher Ashe's excellent little book called Hearing the Spirit. We're reading it among the elders and with the staff at the moment, and I thoroughly recommend it to you. Listen to what he says, discussing one evangelical theologian, a prominent evangelical theologian. In line with this idea, one scholar raises the question of whether the Bible books included in the canon, quote, constitute a conclusion to doctrinal and ethical development, or whether they offer a pattern that the church can continue to follow, a pattern.

In his lectures, he seems to favor the latter, with, quote, the possibility of new revelations through a prophet, with the developments from the old to the new covenant being continued by, quote, further developments, and with these further developments being guided by, quote, a mind nurtured on the gospel.

That is to say, a combination of the apostolic deposit and spirit-given insight. Language is carefully nuanced, but it makes me uneasy, says Christopher Ash, and me too.

[24 : 56] We get one indication of where it might lead when he discusses our distaste for the terrible judgments visited on some of the characters in Jesus' parables. Worst of all these examples, he suggests, is the command of the king who has his enemies brought into his presence and killed before his very eyes, in Luke 19, verse 27.

We find this and other such judgments unacceptable today, he says, and it is incredible that God should so act. So we must conclude that we can no longer think of God in that way, even if this is imagery used by Jesus.

Our basis lies in a mind nurtured by the spirit, the mind of Christ. So, says Christopher Ash, it seems that there may be a tension between the spirit and the written word of the New Testament. Somehow the spirit is giving us the mind of Christ, yet contradicting the imagery used by Christ according to the Gospels. Now, do you see how dangerous this idea is of the Bible not being a closed canon, being open to development?

It can take you anywhere. So, if you go back 20 or 30 years, you would find a number of evangelical theologians very much taking that view and speaking about us needing to go along this redemptive trajectory.

[26 : 22] On the particular issue of the position of men and women and how they relate to one another, they said that we must reject the New Testament's complementarian view of men and women, that is that men and women are equal in God's sight and status, but are not the same, that they complement one another, and therefore it's quite legitimate as the New Testament very plainly teaches that men and women have different roles in the home and family and in the church family.

And so we must go along this trajectory, they said, to say that actually we must have an egalitarian view that this trajectory would continue if the New Testament was not a closed canon.

women and so we must obliterate all such distinctions in role and in office, and men and women can occupy exactly the same places. At the same time as saying that, they plainly rejected that this would ever lead to the issue of blurring distinctions in terms of sexual relationships and same-sex unions.

But in fact, 20 or 30 years on, exactly the same logic, exactly the same logic of a redemptive trajectory that leads you on from Scripture, is precisely what is being used today to justify the fact that sexual unions can also be non-complementarian.

And that same-sex unions, for example, are entirely consistent with the moving on of a trajectory that the New Testament sets. We can see just how dangerous that approach is of immediately saying that the closed canon of Scripture is no longer closed, but is open to development.

[28 : 14] This is the Christ-Rash again. What in practice this approach means is that the written word is trumped by the authority of the Spirit, where what is called the Spirit is actually more like the Spirit of the age.

This ends with a practical evacuation of authority from the revelation of the Father in Christ, tested by Scripture. You see, the truth is very, very different.

You see how that whole approach actually disparages and denigrates the redemption of Christ. It undermines the gospel of Christ. Listen to another quote, this time from the American theologian John Frame, and we're on much safer ground here.

Scripture, he says, is God's testimony to the redemption that he has accomplished for us. Once that redemption is finished, and the apostolic testimony is finished, then the Scriptures are complete. And we should expect no more additions to them. Scripture is the deposit of the apostolic testimony, its written record.

[29 : 33] It is the only form of that testimony passed on to us beyond the apostolic generation. Once that testimony is complete, Scripture is complete.

God himself will not add to the work of Christ, and so we should not expect him to add to the message of Christ.

To do anything like that, to seek to add to the revelation, is to detract from the finished work of Christ. It is to say that the redemptive work of Christ which he has accomplished somehow was not complete.

Somehow is not yet finished. Somehow is not yet adequate. But no, we have a complete witness because we have a complete salvation.

We have a final word from God to us in Christ because we have the final work of God for us in Christ. And that's absolutely vital for us to keep clear.

[30 : 39] And therefore, since that is so, and this is our second point, it follows on that we have a sufficient word. Let's focus here on the reading in 2 Peter.

We have, Peter tells us in 2 Peter chapter 1, all things that pertain, everything we need for life and godliness. And we have it, he says, through the knowledge of him who called us, since he has granted us great and precious promises.

That is, we have it, everything we need, a sufficiency, he says, in the words of both the apostles. Those are the ear witnesses and the eyewitnesses of God's majesty in Christ.

That's what he's talking about in verses 16 to 18 of chapter 1. And we have it also in the prophetic word of the Old Testament that he speaks about in verses 19 to 21, which he says, still shine like a light in the dark until the day the Lord Jesus returns.

We have, he says, all things necessary for salvation, for faith, and for life, as the Westminster Confession puts it. We have it either expressly set down in scripture, or we have it in such a way that by good and necessary inference, it can be deduced from scripture.

[31 : 56] And what that means is that there's no need for us to look elsewhere. No need for us to seek new or special revelations of God. For learning how to live the life of faith and obedience to God.

We don't need to. We have all the divine words that we need, or ever will need. And we have it in scripture. We don't need words of prophecy, or special words of knowledge, or anything that claims to be a fresh revelation.

To say that we do need that is to somehow say that scripture alone is not sufficient. It's to say that scripture needs supplementing. It's to say that God has not given us all we need for life and godliness.

Well, that's exactly what we're told we have been given. It's as simple as that. But, you see, the scripture says we have that in the words of a complete and sufficient revelation in the gospel.

Don't misunderstand me. Let me just make clear what we're not saying. We're not saying, first of all, we're not saying that there's no place for the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit.

[33 : 07] Don't mishear and think that's what we're saying. In fact, look at the second paragraph there of the Westminster Confession section, because it goes straight on to deal with that specifically.

Nevertheless, he says, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary. Necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the world. As we've spoken about that in a previous study, the Holy Spirit opens our eyes and our hearts. We need that so that we can understand God's Word, so that we can see with inward clarity, outward clarity, if you like, the outward clarity that is there in God's written Word.

It's what Paul was speaking about in 1 Corinthians 2, remember. So the Spirit works in us personally. He works His illumination in us so that we can see and understand God's Word. And that is as vital as the inspiration of the Scriptures themselves. Because unless the Spirit opens our minds and our hearts, we can't understand what is true. So God's Word is sufficient, but only the Spirit's ongoing work makes it efficient in our hearts.

[34 : 25] It is sufficient in and of itself. It is clear. But until God opens our eyes and the eyes of our hearts, we can't see it and it doesn't work for us. It's not efficient.

So in a sense, the sufficiency of God's Word demands the work of the Holy Spirit. It doesn't make the Spirit irrelevant at all. It makes the Spirit even more important and even more relevant.

The inward illumination of the Spirit is necessary for the saving understanding of all such things that God has written. So we're not saying the Spirit is no longer at work.

The Holy Spirit is absolutely vital in His work today, just as in His work inspiring the Scriptures. Secondly, we're not saying, because the Scriptures are sufficient, we're not saying that we can't need or use any other information from outside the Bible to help us in our life.

Of course not. We don't need to ignore the insights of common sense or of science or of sociology or mathematics or medicine or anything else.

[35 : 33] Of course not. It simply means that we don't equate any of these things with divine words. We don't elevate any of these things above God's divine words. In fact, God's Word assumes, doesn't it, that we have knowledge from the light of nature, as the Confession calls it, that we have knowledge from God's general revelation in the world round about us.

It assumes that when it speaks to us. So when God's command says to us, honor your father and mother, it assumes that you know what a father and mother is, and it assumes that you have an idea of how to show honor and respect in the culture in which you live.

And it assumes that, doesn't it? And what that will look like, of course, will be different depending on the time and the culture in which we live. How you show honor and respect to your parents will look different in Glasgow in the 17th century than it will in the 21st century, won't it?

It'll look different in India today than it might in Glasgow today. I was in India, and it took me a little while to get used to young men calling me Sir all the time. I actually came to quite like it in the end, but I didn't like it.

I said to Isaac Shaw, why does he keep calling me Sir? It's embarrassing. And he says, oh, it would be disrespectful not to call you Sir. That's what's rather the same, isn't it? In some parts of the United States and the southern states, a person will always call their father Sir.

[36 : 56] Yes, Sir. You would expect it, wouldn't you, in a decent shop here, somebody to call you Sir, but you wouldn't expect it of your children. It doesn't mean you're being disrespected. It just means that you're assuming from the light of nature and general revelation your understanding of what it means to show respect in your culture.

So the Bible doesn't expect us to ignore everything else outside the Bible as though nothing else were valid helps to us in life. Of course not. It assumes we do that. Nor does the sufficiency of Scripture mean that every specific issue we may meet in life will be dealt with as a particular matter in Scripture.

like plumbing, for example, or astronomy, or with Burns Night coming up, should we expect the Scripture to tell us how to make haggis in the orthodox biblical way?

Well, I have that special revelation and I can share it with anybody after us, but it's a great secret.

Of course not. That's just silly, isn't it? Listen again and look at the Westminster Confession.

Look how it goes on. After affirming that all things necessary to salvation and faith in life are either explicit or deducible from Scripture, it adds this. There are some circumstances, it says, even, notice, concerning the worship of God and the government of the church.

[38 : 17] There are some things common to human action in societies which are to be ordered by the light of nature. That is natural revelation to all humanity, things that we all know like gravity or the fact that it rains.

That's why churches have roofs, isn't it? Not because the Bible commands churches to have roofs, but because it rains and we'd get wet if churches didn't have roofs. The light of nature, he says, and Christian prudence, that is, the sane reasoning of Christian people according to the general rules of the word which are always to be obeyed.

So we're to use our nous, our common sense, our learning, our understanding about the world around about us and the culture that we live in always according to the general rules of God's word which are always to be obeyed.

Even if nothing particular is spoken about in Scripture about the particular thing you are thinking about. So, for example, one general rule of the word of God is that murder is always wrong, isn't it? That's a general rule. That must inform our thinking about absolutely everything. Every issue we could think about. For example, issues in medical ethics. Often there, there are very complex issues, aren't there?

[39 : 33] Things that the Bible doesn't deal with specifically. Things like abortion and in vitro fertilization or cloning or stem cell therapy or all sorts of things where much of the information is deeply scientific and specialist.

It comes into the realm of the light of nature. But we must still apply Christian prudence and we must still always apply the general rules of God's word about the sanctity of life in our thinking. So, whatever the particular things we're looking at, whatever the rights and wrongs of particular developments, it must always be considered within these general things which are clear in God's word. Now, what all that amounts to is simply this, is that the Bible is a sufficient word and because it is a sufficient word, we as Christians can and must develop sufficiently Christian minds and Christian thinking.

Christian thinking about everything to do with salvation, with faith, but also with life and morality and ethics and relationships and business life and science and everything. so that in everything we are doing it to the glory of God. Because God's word in scripture is clear, in other words, because we can understand it, because it is coherent and comprehensive and above all because it is complete, then it is sufficient.

[41 : 03] We don't need more of God's words. He's given us all we need so that we can develop a healthy and a wholesome biblical worldview, a framework for everything, every decision, every choice, every action that we have to make in life.

And so we do everything to the glory of God, whether it's our personal relationships, our sexual relationships, whether it's our business life, our medical ethics, our politics, whatever it is. And that's the purpose of scripture. The Bible is for application to life, to real life, to our life, to your life and mine, in the church and in the world.

And moreover, if we can't and if we don't apply the Bible to real life, in fact, what that means, according to the Bible, what that means is we are actually ignorant of scripture. No matter how much we think we know it, no matter how many verses we can recite, we're ignorant.

That's what Jesus said to the scribes and the Pharisees, wasn't it? You search the scriptures, he says, but you're ignorant. You miss the central fact, even though you can recite it all back to front, off by heart.

[42 : 14] You miss the central fact, the whole of the scriptures are there to lead you to salvation through faith in me. And they couldn't see either how the Bible applied to real life issues of their day, to things like marriage and so on.

Mark chapter 12, when the Sadducees ask him stupid questions about marriage, and Jesus says, you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. These were men who knew the scriptures off by heart.

Now Jesus says, you don't know it. You're ignorant of scripture because, because you cannot grasp what it means in real life. According to Jesus, you only know the scriptures at all if you know how to apply them in life and for life.

That's why I last many teachers of scripture, preachers of scripture, can be very, very sound theologically, but very, very dry and very, very boring.

Because in a sense, they live in the word, but they just don't live in the real world. They don't see that unless the word is applied to the real world and to the church, then it's nothing.

[43 : 26] It's valueless. That's why so many scholars and biblical commentators are hopeless and useless to preachers who need their help because they have no idea what the Bible's actually for.

They think it's to populate libraries and classrooms. They think it's for writing articles on and doing PhDs on, but it's not. It's for applying to the life of the church or God's people in the real world.

That's why, alas, also we have many places where we have evangelical ministers but not evangelical ministries or evangelical churches because knowledge about the Bible does not become knowledge of the Bible in person where the Bible actually changes the life of the church and its people, directing and shaping everything.

But the Bible is a sufficient word. It is complete. It has everything we need from God.

Everything that we need to give us salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and everything that we need, says Paul, to equip us for every good work that God has called us to.

[44 : 40] It has all things necessary for his own glory, for man's salvation and faith and life.

Friends, let's thank God.

Thank him that we have such a complete witness. Thank him that God's plans and purpose cannot change and we have no need to fear that. Thank him that in the revelation in Christ we have the whole picture of a glorious God and Savior and a great salvation.

Let's honor God that we have the privilege of a sufficient word, that we have everything we need for life and godliness. Don't let's behave as though somehow it was deficient, that somehow we needed something more, that somehow God was shortchanging us and leaving us in the lurch, not giving us what we need to live our lives adequately and properly and to his glory.

It's easy to do that, isn't it? But it's sinful. Father, let's instead acknowledge what God has given us and constantly be seeking the Spirit's illumination of our hearts to open our eyes more and more and more to the wonderful truths of God's complete and sufficient word.

And also, let's be praying constantly for God to open our hearts and to humble us that we will receive this teaching, that we will receive the reproof and the correction that it contains for us when we're wrong.

[46 : 14] We're wrong in our thoughts and our attitudes and our motivations. That we will be eager to receive its training for righteousness, that we may truly be equipped for every good work that God is calling us to.

And so that we might indeed seek to do all for his glory both in the church and in the world. God has given us a complete witness and therefore we have a sufficient word.

Let's praise him for that. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for the privilege of living in these last days when because of our Savior's finished work and because of our great salvation, we have a final and complete word to lead us all through this world and to lead us to our eternal home.

May we rightly rejoice in that radiant word and may we gladly receive it and obey it in your service. For the glory of our Savior we ask.

Amen.