

#18 “The Sufficiency of Scripture”

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One passage in particular makes an extremely potent case for the sufficiency of the Scripture, and it is the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16 told by Christ Himself.

The story goes like this. There was a certain rich man who had more than he ever wanted or needed. He lived his life for himself, in wasteful, selfish indulgence, not caring about the poor. Lazarus was a poor beggar who only hoped to get a scrap from the rich man's table, though it is not clear if he ever did. After the rich man and Lazarus die, we get a glimpse of their situations in eternity. Lazarus is with Abraham, symbolizing that he is grafted into the family of God by faith in Christ. He is in heaven. The rich man is in agony in the burning flames of hell. Between the two a great chasm which cannot be crossed is fixed. Though not normally possible, for the sake of the story a conversation is said to take place between Lazarus, the rich man, and Abraham. The rich man (though we should note that he is not rich anymore) knows that his five brothers are as wicked as he was and will no doubt end up in torment as he is, so he begs Abraham to send somebody, even Lazarus, to his brothers. He reasons that if his brothers see a person raised from the dead that they will repent and put their faith in God. His hope is that a miraculous vision will be enough to wake them up from their sinful ways. Yet Abraham explains that unless they hear the law and the prophets, which they already have available to them, they will not repent. Abraham's statement, told by Christ as He gives this story, emphatically makes the point that the Scripture is sufficient. The message from this story is that no sign and wonder will cause a person to repent. No trick or technique that man can conjure up can move a man to want to receive Jesus. Unless people hear and receive what they already have available to them in the Word of God, they cannot and will not be saved. In the story, Abraham puts his full confidence in the law and the prophets, the Old Testament Scripture, which foretold of Christ as Messiah. If the rich man's brothers rejected that, nothing, not even Christ being crucified and rising from the dead would be able to convince them to believe. No miracle, not even the greatest one of all time, would be enough to change their hearts and minds. People continue to reject Christ as God and refuse to receive Him as their Savior despite the many signs and wonders that He did. *Christ knew that only the Word of God could change a person's heart. If Christ even by performing the greatest miracle of all time couldn't convince a person to believe, what really do we have to come up with besides the same thing that He trusted in, God's Word?*

Where would we be without the Word of God? The Word of the Lord will endure forever (1 Peter 1:25), and it contains all that we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). The Scripture can stand on its own, and it does not go forth void. It accomplishes what God has set it out to do (Isaiah 55:11). It cuts to joints and marrow, judging the thoughts

and intentions of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). When we treasure it in our hearts, it keeps us from sinning (Psalm 119:11). It is a lamp unto our feet and a light to our path (Psalm 119:105).

Without God's Word, we would be completely insufficient, but our sufficiency is in Christ and in His Word. 2 Corinthians 3:5 says, "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God." And God makes us adequate through receiving the teaching and instruction of His Word. Then, and only then, according to 2 Timothy 3:17, are we "adequate, equipped for every good work." *We must understand that it is the work of the Scripture applied to our hearts that enables us, empowers us, and directs us to be able to effectively and properly love and serve those around us. True life change starts with hearing the Word of God and receiving it in faith.*

Let us not take for granted the preaching, the reading, and the proclamation of the Bible. We need to know it, study it, memorize it, and meditate upon it. It is powerful unto salvation for those who don't believe (Romans 1:16), and it is powerful for sanctification for those who do (John 17:17). If we don't know it, we will be naïve, vulnerable to deception, and unable to stand firm. May God give us the desire and discipline to believe in the sufficiency of His Word to such an extent that it permeates all that we do and say.