

A Reflection on the Sufficiency of Scripture

By Xavier Pickett

Recently, I was a part of a bible study where one of the attendees basically said that to really find out whether someone knows God is what they would say about God without the Bible because what is really important is not what they know of God from the Bible, but from their relationship and experience with God. Our experience of God is more important than what is in the Bible.

As you may know, there is a lot that could be said about that, but I think what's really interesting is the fact we all probably have some level of suspicion of God's word. What I mean is that most, if not, all Christians would profess to believing that the Bible is God's word, but at the same time have a desire for some thing more than the Bible itself. We may not say that with our lips, but sooner or later, it becomes obvious by our actions. For instance, do you feel the need to have a "confirmation" about a decision, even if the decision does not contradict the teachings of Scripture? Do you not seek out forgiveness from others because you are afraid things may not work out still? Are you overly cautious about taking action (not contrary to Scripture) because you are not sure how things will turn out? Do you think suffering is bad and avoid it occasionally, if not, all the time? Do you believe that you cannot experience victory over the sins in your life?

If you answered, "yes" to any of those questions, what it reveals is the degree to which you understand and live by God's word because the reality is that it is sometimes difficult for us to trust God and His word and the "yes" reveals our lack of delight and faith in His word. If the truth be told, one of reasons we desire a confirmation or even a sign is because we want God to tell us more than what He has in His word, the Bible. We want God to tell us something before we take action in the guise of not wanting to be wrong or being uncertain of the future, of course. There is no question that we should be careful and use good judgment before taking action, but if we expect for God to give us more than what He has given in His sufficient word, then that is to cast doubt upon it. However, that is just it; we probably do not truly believe His word to be really sufficient. It is incomplete without God showing us future events because we want to see, hear, taste, feel, or touch something. If I do not see it, feel it, etc., then I cannot trust it because after all, seeing is believing. I want something new, a new experience even. The Bible is old and I need a "new word" just for me. Therefore, what we are really saying is that I cannot believe His word and what it promises for my life until God prove it to me on my terms as if He is under my authority.

Little do we realize that we are much like the rich man in Jesus' discourse about the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-30. If you remember the story, once the rich man went to Hades, he wanted Abraham to send Lazarus back from the dead to warn his family about the place of torment, which he wanted them to avoid. However, Abraham thought otherwise for he said, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them *hear them*." Then the rich man replied, "No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent." Abraham said to him, "If they do not *hear* Moses and the Prophets, neither

will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.” At this point, you may be saying I’m not like the rich man (or even the bible study attendee above), but hold on. What do you think this passage reveal about the rich man’s view of Moses and the Prophets? It is obvious that he believes that Moses and the Prophets are not enough to convince his family because he still wants Abraham to send Lazarus from the dead. In other words, the rich man still does not believe the word of God that Moses and the Prophets represent. He is actually unsatisfied with what God has to say to His people. He wants more than the very words of God in Scripture; he thinks his family, if they are anything like him, has to have an experience in order to believe. How many of us are like the rich man now? How many of us need an experience or feel something before we believe the wonderful gospel promises of God in His word? How many of us want to experience and feel good before we truly believe that all things will work together for good? How many of us want to experience the end of suffering before we truly trust that suffering produces endurance, character, and hope in us?

Let me be clear...I am not saying that experiences of the Christian life are unimportant, but rather when we trust our experiences more than God in His word, we really trust ourselves because we are not depending upon Him alone. We must constantly believe that human experiences are no criterion for truth and faith. Therefore, to not trust God’s authoritative, sufficient, clear, necessary, inerrant, complete and final word in Bible is not to trust God Himself. Why? Because the Bible is the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures. The God who speaks in words cannot be experienced apart from words of the Bible. In other words, since God has chosen to communicate and reveal Himself by words and ultimately by the Incarnate Word, then we cannot truly experience or know Him without the written word.

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