

Men of the Word

SESSION 6:

The Bible Is Necessary

IT IS WRITTEN

Introduction

- William Tyndale was born in Gloucestershire, England, around 1484, and educated at Oxford and Cambridge.
- He became a talented linguist, fluent in Greek, Hebrew, Latin, French, German, Italian, and Spanish.
- In the early 1520s, he was ordained as a priest and served as a tutor to the children of Sir John Walsh.
- “I defy the Pope, and all his laws. If God spare my life ere many years, I will cause the boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.”



- Tyndale began his efforts to translate the Bible into English in 1523, accepting the help of a London merchant and relocating to Germany in 1524.



- Because of the threats against his life and regular betrayals, Tyndale never returned to England but instead lived a life on the run and in poverty.
- He finished an English edition of the New Testament in 1525 and began sending them to England in 1526; many copies were seized and burned.

- The efforts to destroy Tyndale's work and brand him as a heretic only invigorated his mission.

- In 1535, Tyndale was betrayed and captured in Antwerp, Belgium.
- He was imprisoned there for the charge of heresy and interrogated for sixteen months.
- On the morning of October 6, 1536, he was led in a grand procession to a place of execution and was strangled and burned.
- What motivated Tyndale to sacrifice his life was his conviction that the word of God was *necessary* for the people.
- “God requireth obedience unto his word and abhorreth all good intents and good zeals which are without God’s word. For they are nothing else than plain idolatry and worshipping of false gods” (*Obedience of a Christian Man*, 179).



WILLIAM TYNDALE AND THE FIRST PRINTED BIBLE.

“We do not wish to abolish teaching and to make every man his own master, but if the curates will not teach the gospel, the layman must have the Scripture, and read it for himself, taking God for his teacher.”

“Christ desires his mysteries to be published abroad as widely as possible. I would that [the Gospels and letters of Paul] were translated into all languages, of all Christian people, and that they might be read and known.”

—William Tyndale



“Lord, open the king of England’s eyes.”

I. The Nature of Necessity

- “To say that Scripture is necessary is simply to say that we need it” (John Frame, *Doctrine of the Word of God*, 211).
- “**Necessary**” = “absolutely needed” (Miriam-Webster); “needed in order to achieve a particular result” (Cambridge).
- Synonyms = “obligatory,” “required,” “mandatory,” “essential.”
- Scripture is *necessary* not because *God* was obligated or restrained, for “God owes sinners nothing” (J. I. Packer, *Honouring the Written Word of God*, 99).
- Rather, Scripture is necessary because of: (a) *human depravity*; and (b) *the limitation of general revelation*.

- Man has a sin problem.
- **Romans 1:18–23** – “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.”

- **Romans 3:10–12** – “As it is written, ‘THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.’”
- **Romans 3:23** – “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”
- God made man for fellowship with Him, “to glorify God and enjoy Him forever,” but because of Adam’s sin (Genesis 3), all have become hostile and deadened to God.
- **Romans 5:12** – “Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.”

“Total depravity emphasizes the devastating impact of sin on the person and covers three related concepts: (1) the pollution and corruption of all aspects of a person; (2) the complete inability of a person to please God; and (3) universality, in that all are conceived and born as sinners.”

—MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 467

***Man's comprehensive depravity
creates a necessity!***



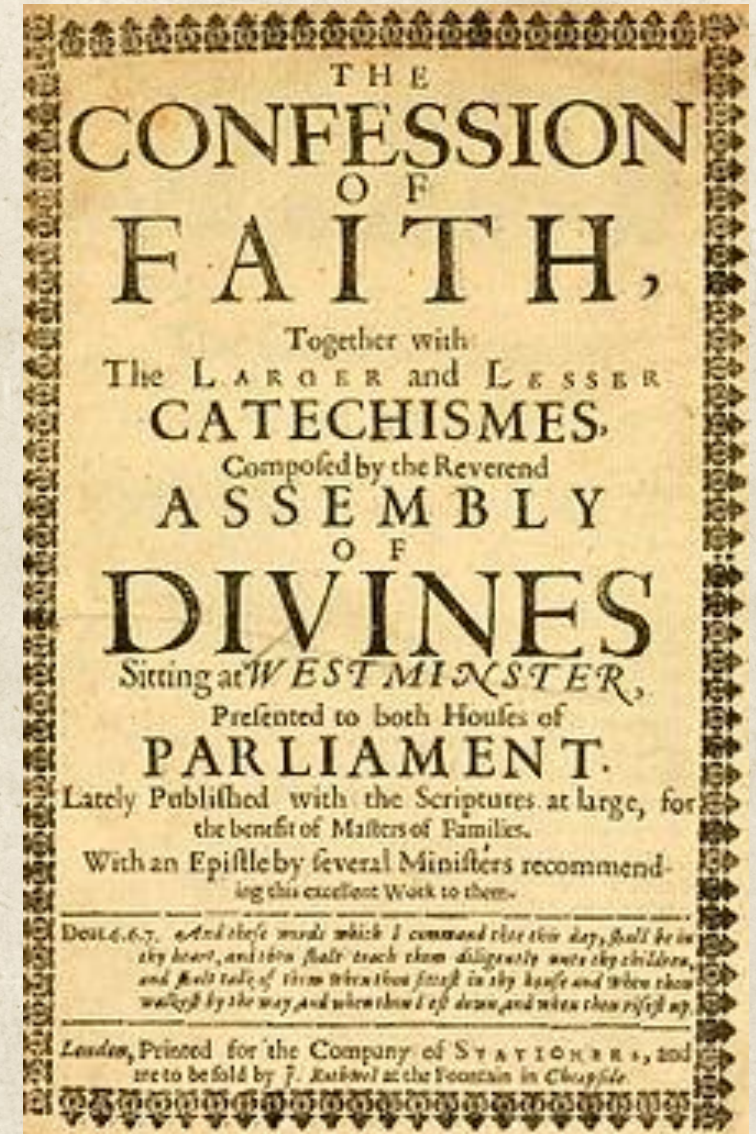
- **“General/Natural Revelation”** – the knowledge of God that is communicated by the natural order (creation, the course of history, human conscience, etc.), and evident to all people, at all times, and in all places.”
- Key texts: Psalm 19:1–6; Acts 14:15–17; Acts 17:22–29; Romans 1:16–32; Romans 2:11–16.
- General revelation communicates . . .
 - Aspects of the character of God.
 - The reality of sin and the necessity of righteousness.
 - The inexcusability of rebellion against God.
 - The need to seek God for a remedy.

- But general revelation is limited because of . . .
 - **Its *breadth***—there are many things that God does not reveal in general revelation that are necessary to know Him personally.
 - **Its *depth***—there are many things that God reveals only generally in creation which require more detail for fellowship.
 - **Its *delivery***—general revelation is sensed and observed but is not communicated in language; thus, it not only requires interpretation but the added effort of articulation in word.
 - **Its *purpose***—it reveals God's goodness and exposes man's depravity, but it does not explain the way of salvation to sinners.

“Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men unexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation. . . .”

—Westminster Confession of Faith, 1.1

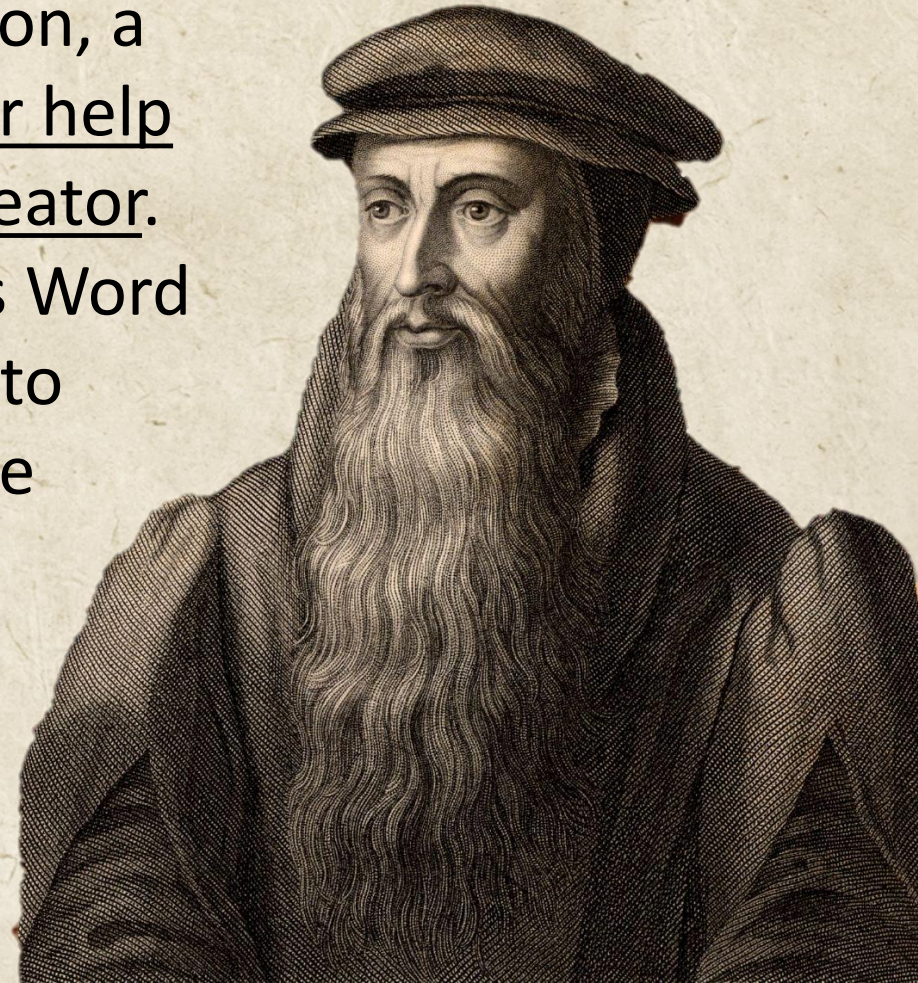
The limited purpose of general revelation creates a necessity!



- It is in response to these two fundamental issues that the written revelation of God is needed.
- John Feinberg: “Scripture contains everything that can be learned from natural revelation, but it also contains information that is nowhere available to the human race as a whole or to individuals in particular, and yet it is just that information that every human who has ever lived so desperately needs to know” (“The Necessity of Scripture”).
- Kevin DeYoung: “So this is the necessity of Scripture in a nutshell: *We need the revelation of God to know God, and the only sure, saving, final, perfect revelation of God is found in Scripture*” (*Taking God At His Word*, 90).

“Though the effulgence which is presented to every eye, both in the heavens and on the earth, leaves the ingratitude of man without excuse, since God, in order to bring the whole human race under the same condemnation, holds forth to all, without exception, a mirror of his Deity in his works, another and better help must be given to guide us properly to God as a Creator. Not in vain, therefore, has he added the light of his Word in order that he might make himself known unto salvation, and bestowed the privilege on those whom he was pleased to bring into nearer and more familiar relation to himself.”

—John Calvin, *Institutes* I.6.1



- Westminster Confession of Faith: “. . . Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing: which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God’s revealing his will unto his people being now ceased” (1.1).
- Millard Erickson: “The problems of sin, guilt, and depravity had to be resolved; means of atonement, redemption, and reconciliation had to be provided. And now sin diminished man’s comprehension of general revelation, thus lessening its efficacy. Therefore, special revelation had to become remedial with respect to both man’s knowledge of and his relationship to God” (*Christian Theology*, 177).

II. The Testimony to Necessity

A. Scripture is necessary because *regeneration* is necessary.

- Scripture, applied by the Holy Spirit, is God's chosen instrument through which He brings life to the spiritually dead.
- **James 1:18** – “In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.”
- **1 Peter 1:23** – “For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God.”

B. Scripture is necessary because *faith* is necessary.

- Faith, the means by which God justifies the sinner, is only possible in response to Scripture.
- **Romans 10:13–14** – “for ‘WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.’ How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?”
- **Romans 10:17** – “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”
- **2 Timothy 3:15** – “from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

C. Scripture is necessary because *sanctification* is necessary.

- Spiritual growth is not the *cause* of salvation, but its *effect*—and God’s word is its essential ingredient.
- **Matthew 4:4 (see Deuteronomy 8:3)** – “But He answered and said, ‘It is written, “MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.”’”
- **John 17:17** – “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.”
- **Colossians 3:16** – “Let the word of Christ dwell richly within you”
- **1 Peter 2:2** – “Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.”

D. Scripture is necessary because *proclamation* is necessary.

- Christ saves and edifies His people through the proclamation of His word.
- **Romans 10:13–15** – “How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?”
- **1 Timothy 4:13** – “Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.”
- **2 Timothy 4:1–2** – “I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort”

E. Scripture is necessary because *correction* is necessary.

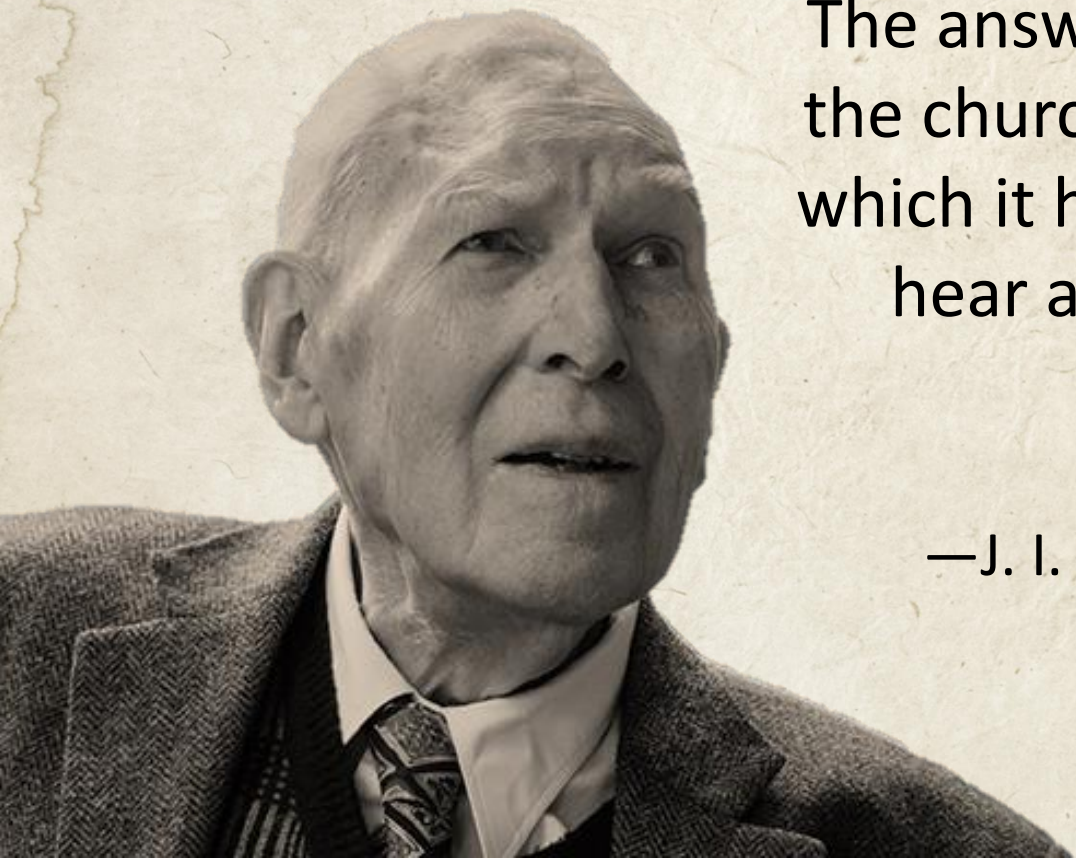
- In the Christian's fallible state, inscripturated revelation is constantly needed to prevent drift into error and to eradicate existing error.
- **2 Timothy 3:16** – "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness."
- **Titus 1:9** – "holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict."
- **Hebrews 4:12** – "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."



“If Holy Scripture is neglected, then nothing in the Christian religion can be established with certainty, for from outside of it no criterion or guidance could be given to distinguish the divine truth from false influences and erroneous forces.”

—Antonius Walaeus (1573–1639),
Synopsis of a Purer Theology, 2.9

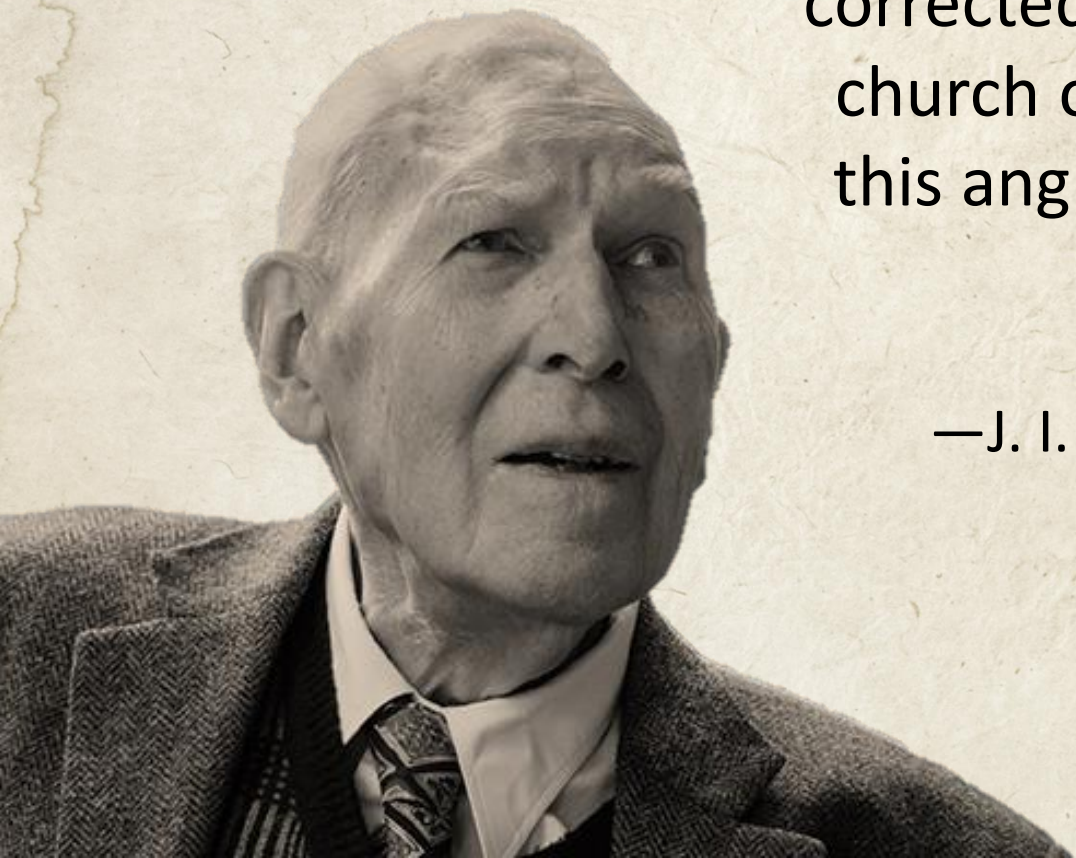
- In fact, “a great deal of the Bible is in fact devoted to detecting and correcting errors” (J. I. Packer, *Honouring the Written Word of God*, 104).
- William Barrick: “In other words, there is an innate antagonism in the sinful nature to divine truth about mankind’s lost condition and the divine remedy for sin. In the light of human failings and the antipathy of sinners, Scripture is the most certain safeguard against the corruption of special revelation” (“The Necessity of Scripture,” 159).
- John Calvin: “For if we reflect how prone the human mind is to lapse into forgetfulness of God, how readily inclined to every kind of error, how bent every now and then on devising new and fictitious religions, it will be easy to understand how necessary it was to make such a depository of doctrine” (*Institutes*, I.6.3).



“Always vulnerable to these tendencies [of compromise] and likely to petrify in external formalism, the church’s life presents a pattern of constant decline, reversed, however, from time to time by fresh outpourings of the Spirit of God. What does the Spirit do at these times? The answer can be stated with precision. He confronts the church afresh with the revealed Word of God from which it has drifted, and causes professed Christians to hear again the biblical message of grace as God’s promise and call to themselves.”

—J. I. Packer, *Honouring the Written Word of God*, 106

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“This has been the real essence of all movements of genuine reformation and revival in the church. Were there no revealed Word of God by which degenerate traditional forms of faith and worship could be corrected, the renewal that is constantly needed in the church on earth would never be possible. Thus, from this angle also, the necessity of the revealed Word of God appears.”

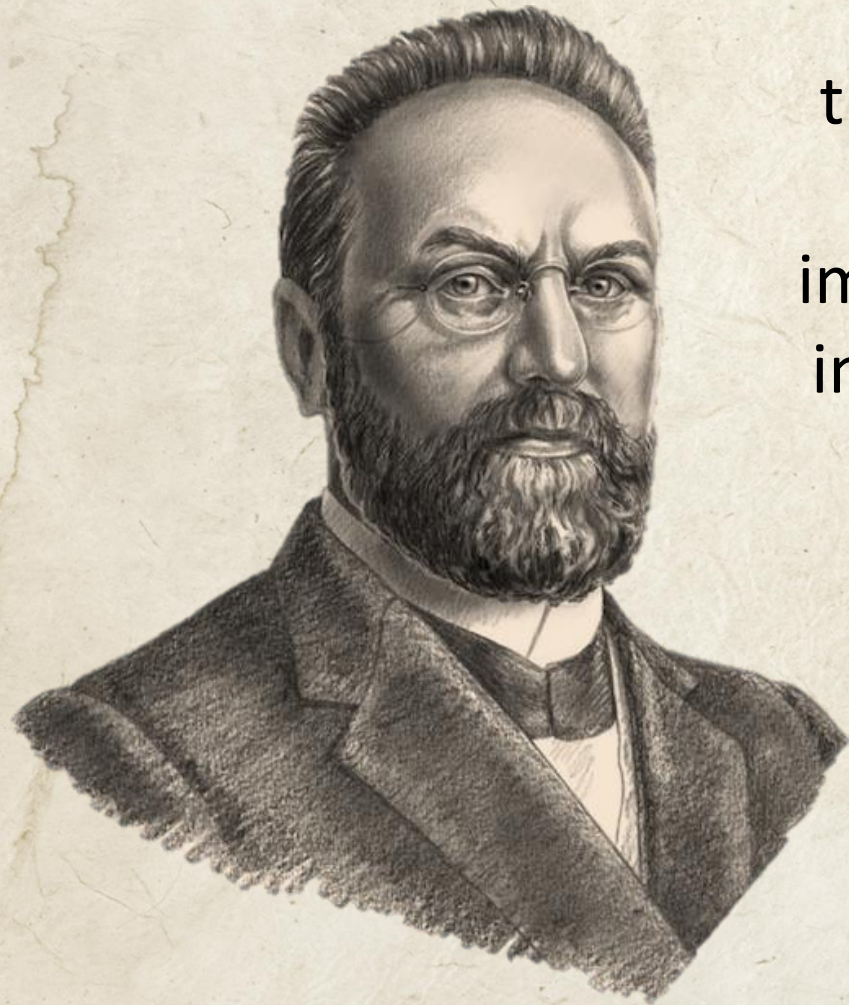
—J. I. Packer, *Honouring the Written Word of God*, 106

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F. Scripture is necessary because *propagation* is necessary.

- God's word is not only a word for a specific situation; though fixed, it is a word to be broadcast to all generations of all of mankind.
- **Deuteronomy 29:29** – “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever”
- **Matthew 28:19–20** – “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you”
- This message was communicated initially in oral form because of the immediate presence of God's spokesmen, but as they passed off the scene the need arose for a means of transmission that would ensure the preservation of the message.

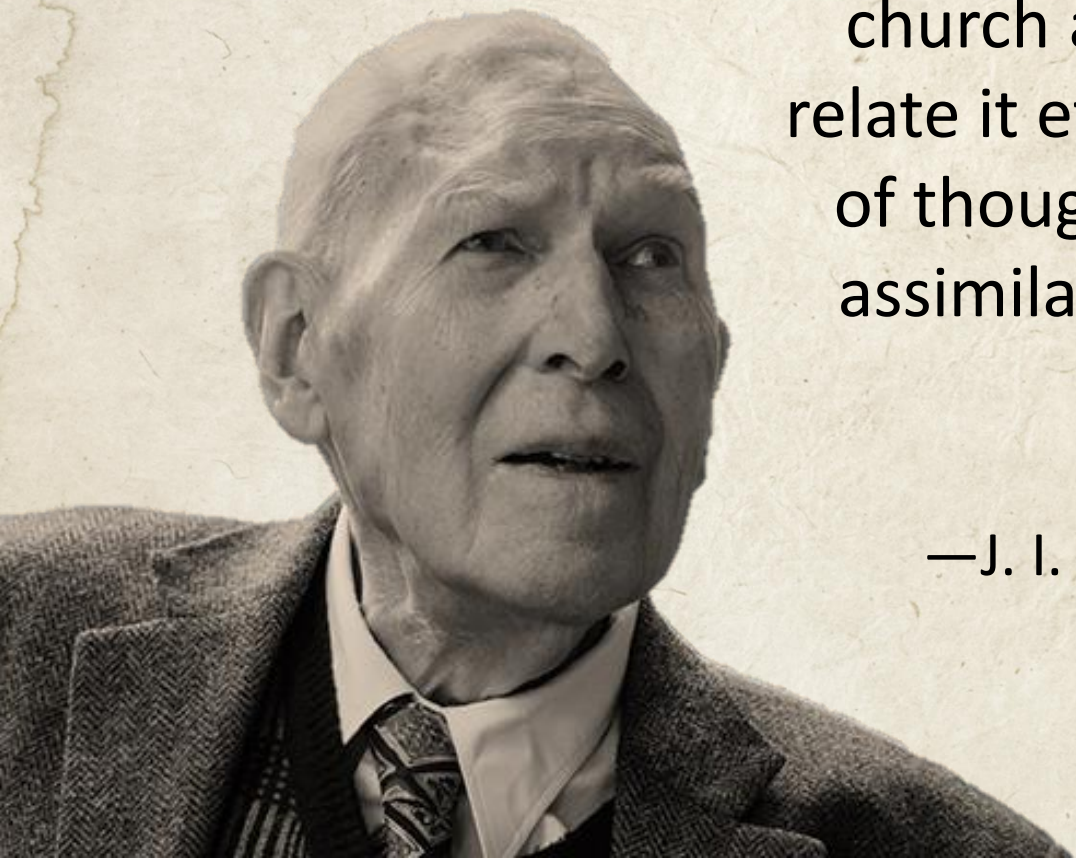
- God's revelation in *written form* is the most effective means not only *to reveal* definite knowledge about God, but also *to preserve, to distribute, and to establish* this knowledge to the ends of the earth.
- As a written text, God's word is *durable* and *fixed*; it can be *translated* and *published*.
- William Barrick: "Since God intended His Word for all mankind, the written Word would be the best means by which to perpetuate and disperse it even in an unfallen world" ("The Necessity of Scripture," 159).
- Joel Beeke and Paul Smalley: "Written documents have far greater stability over time, uniformity in content when copied, and universality of public access than oral traditions" (*Reformed Systematic Theology*, 1.356).



“Naturally, as long as the apostles were alive and visited the churches, no distinction was made between their spoken and their written word. Tradition and Scripture were still unified. But when the first period was past and time-distance from the apostles grew greater, their writings became more important, and the necessity of the writings gradually intensified. The necessity of Holy Scripture, in fact, is not a stable but an ever-increasing attribute.”

—Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1.470

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“If the church could be trusted to transmit apostolic teaching undistorted, the need for Scripture would be less. But the church, being made up of sinners who are not yet perfectly delivered from inbred intellectual perversity, cannot be relied on to do this. Whenever the church attempted to rethink its message in order to relate it effectively to current non-Christian movements of thought, a spirit of worldliness operates to induce assimilation of the Gospel to that which it should be challenging and correcting.”

—J. I. Packer, *Honouring the Written Word of God*, 106

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IV. The Implications of Necessity

“It is no secret that Christ’s Church is not in good health in many places of the world. She has been languishing because she has been fed, as the current line has it, ‘junk food’; all kinds of artificial preservatives and all sorts of unnatural substitutes have been served up to her. As a result, theological and biblical malnutrition has afflicted the very generation that has taken such giant steps to make sure its physical health is not damaged by using foods or products that are harmful to their bodies. Simultaneously a worldwide spiritual famine resulting from the absence of any genuine publication of the Word of God (Amos 8:11) continues to run wild and almost unabated in most quarters of the Church.”



—Walter Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 7–8

A. Acknowledge your need for these Scriptures!

- The Bible is not merely a family heirloom or religious artifact. We must approach it for what it really is—*our very life*.
- “The doctrine of the necessity of Scripture reminds us of our predicament: the One we need to know most cannot be discovered on our own. And it assures us of a solution: this same ineffable One has made himself known through his word” (DeYoung, *Taking God At His Word*, 86).

B. Thank God for His provision of these Scriptures!

- “God owes sinners nothing.”
- Despite our unworthiness, God condescended to us and provided us His word—something that is “more desirable than gold” and “sweeter also than honey” (Psalm 19:10).

C. Take up and read these Scriptures!

- Do not fail to take full advantage of what is in your hands; men like William Tyndale gave their lives to ensure you have access to it.
- Calvin: “No one can get even the slightest taste of right and sound doctrine unless he be a pupil of Scripture” (*Institutes*, 1.6.2).

D. Lead your family to these Scriptures!

- Show your wife and children, or any who may observe your life, that you really do believe in the necessity of the word of God.
- Few influences in life are as powerful and beneficial as your personal example of dependency on the Scriptures.

E. Proclaim these Scriptures!

- The necessity of Scripture is powerful motivation to take the word to the world. There is no other source of truth for the solution of the sinner's problem.
- Scripture is the only solution to the "famine in the land."

Men *of the* Word
2024–2025

IT IS WRITTEN

A Study of
the Doctrine
of Scripture