

Characteristics of Scripture

Necessity

Chapter 7 in Grudem

1. Introduction to the Necessity of Scripture
 - 1.1. ***The necessity of Scripture means that the Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God's will, but is not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God's character and moral laws.***
 - 1.2. The necessity of Scripture is part of understanding the difference between general and special revelation.
 - 1.2.1. General revelation refers to God's revelation of Himself and truth through creation and conscience. It is called general because it is generally available to all humans, and because it is general rather than specific in its content.
 - 1.2.2. Special revelation refers to God's revelation regarding Himself, humanity, truth, sin, and salvation that is contained in Scripture. It is called special because it is only available through the Scripture, and because it is much more specific in its content than general revelation.
 - 1.2.3. The classic text for seeing both general and special revelation together is Psalm 19:
 - vv1-6 - general revelation in creation
 - vv7-11 - special revelation in the Scripture
 - vv12-14 - our response to God's revelation
2. The Bible Is Necessary for Knowledge of the Gospel
 - 2.1. The Bible states that while we can know that God exists from nature (see below), we can only know the Gospel through Scripture.
 - 2.1.1. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." ¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. Romans 10:13-17 ESV
 - 2.1.1.1. To be saved, one must call on the name of the Lord (v13)
 - 2.1.1.2. To call on the name of the Lord Jesus, one must believe (v14)
 - 2.1.1.3. To believe in the Lord Jesus, one must have heard of him (v14)
 - 2.1.1.4. To hear of the Lord Jesus, someone must preach the Gospel to them (v14)
 - 2.1.1.5. This is why God sends messengers to proclaim the Gospel (v15)
 - 2.1.1.6. Faith that leads to salvation comes from hearing the Word of Christ - the Scripture (v17)

- 2.1.2. Even Old Covenant believers were saved by believing the message of the Gospel. Though Jesus had not yet come, their faith was in God's promise to send the Redeemer, the Seed of the woman, to bring salvation. The New Testament refers to this as the Gospel.
- 2.1.2.1. And **the Scripture**, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, **preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham**, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." Galatians 3:8 ESV
- 2.1.2.2. For **good news came to us just as to them**, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. Hebrews 4:2 ESV
- 2.1.2.3. and how from childhood you have been acquainted with **the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus**. 2 Timothy 3:15 ESV
- 2.1.3. Hebrews 11 is clear that the people in the Old Covenant had sufficient knowledge from God's Word to have true faith in Christ and looked forward to His coming and eternity with God.
- 2.1.3.1.13 These all died in **faith**, not having received **the things promised**, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴ For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But as it is, **they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one**. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. Hebrews 11:13-16 ESV
- 2.1.3.2.24 By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶ **He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward**. Hebrews 11:24-26 ESV
- 2.2. There is no path to salvation apart from Jesus. To be saved from sin, one must come to God through faith in Christ.
- 2.2.1. Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. **No one comes to the Father except through me**." John 14:6 ESV
- 2.2.2. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For **God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him**. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but **whoever does not believe is condemned already**, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. John 3:16-18 ESV
- 2.2.3. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 1 Timothy 2:5 ESV

- 2.2.4. And there is salvation in no one else, for **there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**” Acts 4:12 ESV
- 2.3. To think that people can know and respond to God apart from the Gospel found in Scripture leads to several errors.
 - 2.3.1. Such a view leads to the false idea that we are condemned, not for our sin, but rather for the specific sin of not believing in Christ. But in Scripture, we are judged for all of our sins, not just for the sin of rejecting the Gospel.
 - 2.3.2. Such a view means that the coming of Christ actually condemned people. If He had not come, they could have been saved by believing in God through creation or their own conscience, but since He came, they are now condemned because they did not believe in Him.
 - 2.3.3. Such a view undermines the imperative of the Great Commission. In fact, people might have been saved until we brought the Gospel to them, but now they are condemned because they did not believe.
- 2.4. Understanding that the Scripture is necessary for people to understand and respond to the Gospel has several important implications.
 - 2.4.1. The Church must carry the Gospel to all people, for there is no other way for them to be saved. This is the message of Romans 10:13-17, quoted above. It is this reality that underlies the Great Commission.
 - 2.4.2. It is not enough for believers or the Church to do good works - we must preach the Gospel for people to be saved. Good works can point to the Gospel and prepare the way for evangelism, but they can never take its place.
 - 2.4.3. The Church must be engaged in translating the Scripture into every language! Missionaries can proclaim the Scripture into a language even before the whole Bible has been translated into that language, but for a church to be planted and grow, the Scriptures are needed in the language of the people.
- 3. The Bible is necessary for a healthy spiritual life
 - 3.1. Although other practices may help one grow, the Scripture is necessary for one to be spiritually healthy and grow.
 - 3.1.1. But he answered, “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”” Matthew 4:4 ESV
 - 3.1.2. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for **teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,** ¹⁷ **that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.** 2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV
 - 3.1.3. And now I commend you to God and to **the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.** Acts 20:32 ESV
 - 3.2. In the early ages, the people of God did not have access to written Scriptures in private. This is why the worship of God’s people centered on the reading and teaching of the Word - it was the only access the people had to the Word of God. It also explains why the people met so regularly for worship.

4. The Bible is necessary for certain knowledge of God's will
 - 4.1. Although the basics of God's moral law are inscribed on creation and conscience (see below), only the Scripture gives detailed teachings on truth and error, right and wrong, good and evil. As noted above, God's revelation in creation, including human nature/conscience, is general revelation and is thus only general rather than specific in its content. See below for more information.
 - 4.2. The Bible does not contain all truth known to God (which is impossible for creatures to understand), but it does contain what is necessary for us to know to believe the Gospel and grow in our Christian life.
 - 4.2.1. "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but **the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.**" Deuteronomy 29:29 ESV
 - 4.2.2. The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; ⁸ the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; ⁹ the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. ¹⁰More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. ¹¹ Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. ¹² Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. ¹³Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. Psalm 19:7-13 ESV
 - 4.2.2.1. Psalm 19 covers both general revelation (Psalm 19:1-6), and special revelation/Scripture (Psalm 19:7-13).
 - 4.2.2.2. Verses 7-13 show how Scripture excels the revelation found in creation, especially in its specific teachings regarding God's commands for us.
 - 4.3. This is why believers are called to meditate on God's Word day and night, and are promised that they will prosper in life as they do so.
 - 4.3.1. but his delight is in **the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.** ³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he **prosper.** Psalm 1:2-3 ESV
 - 4.3.2. This **Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night,** so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way **prosperous,** and then you will have good success. Joshua 1:8 ESV
5. The Bible is not necessary to know that God exists

- 5.1. All humans inherently know that God exists. We can't "Not know" He exists and that we will answer to Him. This is because this general revelation is written into creation and stamped onto our nature and presses us via our conscience.
- 5.1.1. Creation presses the knowledge of God upon every human from outside.
- 5.1.1.1. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. Romans 1:19-20 ESV
- 5.1.1.2. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. ² Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. ³ There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. ⁴ Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun, ⁵ which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy. ⁶ Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat. Psalm 19:1-6 ESV
- 5.1.2. Human nature presses the knowledge of God from within, especially through our conscience.
- 5.1.2.1. Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:26-27 ESV
- 5.1.2.2. For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them Romans 2:14-15 ESV
- 5.1.3. Thus, the knowledge that God exists is inescapable because it presses on every human both from without and within. Those who deny God's existence do so, not from a lack of evidence, but from the sinful desire to suppress this knowledge.
- 5.1.3.1. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and

divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. **So they are without excuse.** For **although they knew God, they did not honor him as God** or give thanks to him, but they **became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.**
Romans 1:18-21 ESV

6. The Bible is not necessary for knowing something about God's nature, character, and moral laws.
 - 6.1. Creation makes God's eternal power and divinity clear to all
 - 6.1.1. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For **his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.** So they are without excuse. Romans 1:19-20 ESV
 - 6.1.2. In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. ¹⁷ Yet **he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.**" Acts 14:16-17 ESV
 - 6.2. Our nature, especially in our conscience, reveals that God is moral and we are called to follow His character rather than sin.
 - 6.2.1. For when Gentiles, **who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves,** even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ **They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness,** and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them Romans 2:14-15 ESV
 - 6.3. This external and internal witness to God's existence and basic nature should give us hope as we pray for and share the Gospel with those who do not yet believe. God is already at work in their lives before we even open our mouths!