

Lesson 2 - Scripture

1. How do we know how to glorify and enjoy God?
 - a. The natural law teaches us, but . . . : 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 . . ." (WCF 1.1).
 - b. As sinners, we have no way of knowing the way to enjoy and glorify God without God's salvation. WLC 2 How doth it appear that there is a God? A. The very light of nature in man, and the works of God, declare plainly that there is a God; but his word and Spirit only, do sufficiently and effectually reveal him unto men for their salvation.
 - c. In addition, but the Scriptures present it in writing (WCF 1.1).
 - d. WSC 2 What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him? A. The word of God, which is contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.
2. The significance of this teaching in application
 - a. We should read it!
 1. How we should read it - WSC 90 How is the word to be read and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation? A. That the word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence, preparation, and prayer; receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practice it in our lives.
 2. WLC 157 How is the word of God to be read? A. The holy scriptures are to be read with an high and reverent esteem of them; with a firm persuasion that they are the very word of God, and that he only can enable us to understand them; with desire to know, believe, and obey the will of God revealed in them; with diligence, and attention to the matter and scope of them; with meditation, application, self-denial, and prayer.
 - b. We should believe it!
 - c. We should obey it!
3. Why do we believe that the Bible is the Word of God?
 - a. The reasons: "the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole, (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God . . ." (WCF 1.5).
 - b. What is the Bible? The Old and New Testaments.
 1. Jesus' confirmation of the Old Testament: He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets

- and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44).
2. Jesus’ announcement of the New Testament through the Apostles: “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. 13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14 He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you” (John 16:12-14).
 - c. It is the work of the Holy Spirit: “. . . yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts” (WCF 1.5). Note also WSC 89: WSC 89 How is the word made effectual to salvation? A. The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation. Note also WLC 2.
4. The context of the WS is the debate with Rome primarily, but in our time it is against those who deny the plenary verbal inspiration of the Bible. You find a bit more precision on this in more recent confessions.
 - a. The Wesleyan Articles: “We believe that the books of the Old and New Testaments constitute the Holy Scriptures. They are the inspired and *infallibly written Word of God, fully inerrant* in their original manuscripts and superior to all human authority, and have been transmitted to the present without corruption of any essential doctrine.”
 - b. Southern Baptist Faith & Message: The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God’s revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, *without any mixture of error, for its matter*.
 5. Are they sufficient? Do they tell us what we need to know to believe and live a godly life?
 - a. Yes. They give us a complete rule of faith and life. 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 (WCF 1.6, 2 Tim. 3:16-17).
 - b. What about the difficulty of understanding them? Any person can understand them: “yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them” (WCF 1.7).
 6. The Bible is authoritative
 - a. What does this mean? WCF 14.2 By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God Himself speaking therein; and acteth differently upon that which each particular

passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.

- b. In our church life. We appeal to Scripture: “so as, in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them” (WCF 1.8).
 - c. We use Scripture to interpret Scripture. “The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly” (1.9).
 - d. Everything else is subordinate to it: “The supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture” (1.10).
 - e. Note how this comes up in the section of church councils: “All synods or councils, since the Apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err; and many have erred. Therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith, or practice; but to be used as a help in both” (31.4).
7. What do we do with the fact that people disagree about their meaning? This is a question of the Bible’s authority.
- a. Note also WSC 89: WSC 89 How is the word made effectual to salvation?
 - A. The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation.
 - b. Each church must judge this. Here is a great article on this whole topic by Presbyterian theologian Robert Lewis Dabney, “What Is Christian Union?”: <https://www.the-highway.com/articleJuly05.html>
 - c. Note that among Christian churches, there is general unanimity on who God is and how He saves, even if they do not agree on secondary doctrines. See my summary of the agreement of a variety of Christian doctrines: <https://www.weswhite.net/2018/01/where-we-all-agree/>