

**Lecture 3- Knowledge of God: Scripture****Prayer**

*Almighty God, Thou shewest Thy glory for us to see, not only in heaven and earth, but also in the law, the prophets, and the Gospel, and hast so intimately revealed Thyself in Thine only begotten Son that we cannot excuse ourselves out of ignorance. Grant that we may advance in this teaching wherewith Thou so kindly invitest us to Thyself, and may thus steadfastly cleave to Thee, that no errors of the world may lead us astray, but may stand firmly fixed in Thy Word, which cannot deceive us, at last reaching heavenly blessedness that we may enjoy Thy glory face to face, conformed completely to Thee. In Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*

**Knowledge of God: Scripture**

Doctrine of Scripture in the *Institutes* — 1, 6–9; 3, 2; and 4, 8

## I. Knowledge of God the Creator Revealed in Scripture (1, 6)

- A. “Another and better help”
- B. “Spectacles” (See Appendix B)
- C. Special revelation repeats and supplements general revelation

## II. Calvin's Doctrine of Scripture

## A. The Bible is the inspired word of God

- 1. The divine origin of the Bible — *Institutes* 1, 7, 5; *Commentary* on 2 Timothy (3:16); *Commentary* on 2 Peter (1:10, 20); *Commentary* on Jeremiah (38:28)
- 2. The divine Word is accommodated to “our capacity” (1, 13, 1)

## B. The Bible is the word of God revealed in human language (1, 7, 5)

- 1. Diverse styles of the Bible writers (1, 8, 2)
- 2. Problems and apparent discrepancies in the Bible (*Commentary* on Genesis [1:16]; Matthew [8:23–27]; Mark [4:35–41]; Luke [8:22–25]; Matthew 27:9; Acts 7:14; Acts 7:16; Romans 3:4; Romans 9:10; 11:12; and 14:1; Ephesians 4:8; Hebrews 11:21)
- 3. Did Calvin view the Bible as inerrant?

## a. No

- 1) F. Wendel (pp. 159, 160)
- 2) J. T. McNeill (Intro. liv, notes 4, 8, 8)
- 3) J. Rogers and D. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible* (pp. 89–116)

## b. Yes

- 1) B. B. Warfield, “Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God” (p. 162)
- 2) J. Murray (“Calvin's Doctrine of Scripture”)
- 3) K. Kantzer (“Calvin and Holy Scripture”)
- 4) E. Dowey—Calvin “conceived the Scriptures as literally dictated by God” (p. 99)

## C. The Bible is confirmed to the believer by the inner witness of the Holy Spirit

- 1. Objective cure — the Bible
- 2. The authority of the Bible — the church (1, 7, 1–3); rational “proofs” (1, 7, 4 and 1,8); “testimony of the Holy Spirit”
- 3. Subjective cure — Holy Spirit (1, 7, 2; 1, 7, 4; and 1, 7, 5) — “self-authenticated”
- 4. “Sufficiently firm proofs” confirm in the Christian “the testimony of the Holy Spirit” (1, 8)

## a. Description of the “proofs” (indicia)

- 1) Proofs from the Old Testament — great antiquity; miracles; fulfilled

- prophecy; preservation (1, 8, 3–10)
  - 2) Proofs from the New Testament — heavenly character; simplicity; authority (1, 8, 11)
  - 3) Proofs from church history — testimony of the church to the Scriptures; testimony of the martyrs (1, 8, 12 & 13)
  - b. Function of the “proofs”
    - 1) The Holy Spirit illumines by means of the proofs (Warfield)
    - 2) The Holy Spirit illumines directly (Dowey, Packer); the proofs are “secondday aids to our feebleness” (1, 8, 13)
- III. Calvin Maintained the Unity of the Word and Spirit Against Two Errors
- A. Catholics subordinated the Scriptures to the church (1, 7, 1–3)
  - B. “Fanatics” elevated the Spirit over the Scriptures (1, 9)
    - 1. The Word without the Spirit is dead
    - 2. The Spirit without the Word is delusion

### **For Further Study**

Dowey, E. A. *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1952.

A substantial study which supports Calvin's acceptance of an inerrant Scripture and sets forth a correct view of Calvin's understanding of “the testimony of the Spirit.” Use, however, with caution, due to Dowey's Barthian interpretation of Calvin.

Montgomery, J.W., ed. “Calvin's View of Scripture.” *God's Inerrant Word*. Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship Inc., 1974.

Well-written study by J. I. Packer, a well-known evangelical scholar.

Murray, J. *Calvin on Scripture and Divine Sovereignty*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960. Important treatment of “*Calvin's Doctrine of Scripture*” and “*Calvin and the Authority of Scripture*.”

Walwood, J.F., ed. “Calvin and the Holy Scriptures.” *Inspiration and Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957.

Good chapter by Kenneth S. Kantzer, who did his Harvard Ph. D. on Calvin and Scripture.

Warfield, B. B. “Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God.” *Calvin and Augustine*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1956.

Excellent study.