

## **Back to the Basics**

### **In Defense of Absolute Truth**

Over the past several months God has been very busy in my life. As inevitably occurs, God is working methodically and purposefully to reveal something to me. As we have been studying the defense of the Christian Faith in our Sunday evening study, the evangelism of our faith in Contagious Christianity, and then spiritual maturity via James and Peter, God has been showing me the importance of Christian character and gaining knowledge and insights about our faith. In order to grow in knowledge and wisdom in our faith, it is important to understand the basics and be able to both defend them to others and apply them to our own lives.

Today I am beginning a series of sermons to expand our knowledge of basic Christian doctrines so we can apply them in our daily walk with Jesus and, in turn, explain them to others who don't believe. It is not my intent to delve deeply into each doctrine, but rather to provide a foundational knowledge from which to build upon in Bible studies and personal devotionals. This morning I am starting, like all good builders, with the foundation of our faith, The Bible.

The Bible is the source document of Christianity. To undermine, discredit and reject the Bible is to undermine, discredit and reject Christianity. The Bible is one book with 66 chapters outlining one major theme; God's salvation plan. I like the way John phrased the summation of the Bible in six words: OT=Jesus is Coming; NT=Jesus is here.

In a culture where God's Word is constantly under attack from those both inside and outside of the church, we must always be ready to give a defense for the hope that is in us. We must remember and unequivocally assert that The Bible is the Word of God and, as such, is absolute truth.

In order to understand and defend the absolute truth of the Bible, we have to address the question, “Why Should We Believe in the Inerrancy of Scripture?”

Let’s say you are having a faith discussion with someone and they say, “You don’t really believe the Bible is true, do you?” What is your response?

Since we live in a world of relativism and political correctness, inevitably, their next question is, “what does the Christian mean by “without error,” and why are we so sure?

Now we begin to explain and defend absolute truth. I want to make three points this morning. The first is defining what we mean by “without error” (inerrancy); the second is offering some reasons why we believe the absolute truth (inerrancy) of the Bible and the last is the importance of the Bible being absolute truth.

## **I. Inerrancy:**

Let’s start by understanding what we mean when we talk about the Bible as “inspired” because that word may mislead us. The term is an attempt to translate a word that occurs only once in the New Testament. The word is found in 2 Timothy 3:16, and the Greek is *theopneustos*. This term is made from two words, one being the word for God (*theos*, as in theology) and the other referring to breath or wind (*pneustos*, as in pneumonia and pneumatic). It is significant that the word is used in 2 Timothy 3:16 passively. “<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,” In other words, God did not “*breathe into*” (inspire) all Scripture, but it was “*breathed out*” by God (expired). Thus, 2 Timothy 3:16 is not about how the Bible *came to us* but where it *came from*. The Scriptures are “God-breathed.”

To know how the Bible came to us, we can turn to 2 Peter 1:21 where we discover that, “prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” The Greek word used here is *pherō*, which means “to bear” or “to carry.” It was a familiar word that Luke used of the sailing ship carried along by the wind (Acts 27:15, 17). The human writers of the Bible certainly used their minds, but the Holy Spirit carried them along in their thinking so that only His God-breathed words were recorded.

The word “inspiration” is so embedded in our Christian language that we will continue to use it, though we now know what it really means. God breathed out His Word, and the Holy Spirit guided the writers. The Bible has one Author and many (around 40) writers.

With these two acts of God—breathing out His Word and carrying the writers along by the Spirit—we can come to a definition of inspiration:

The Holy Spirit moved men to write. He allowed them to use their own styles, cultures, gifts, and character. He allowed them to use the results of their own study and research, write of their own experiences, and express what was in their minds. At the same time, the Holy Spirit did not allow error to influence their writings. He overruled in the expression of thought and in the choice of words. Thus, they recorded accurately all God wanted them to say and exactly how He wanted them to say it in their own character, styles, and languages.

If “inspired” really means “God-breathed,” then the claim of 2 Timothy 3:16 is that **all** Scripture, being God-breathed, is without error and therefore can be trusted completely. Since Hebrews 6:18 tells us that God cannot lie, He would cease to be God if He breathed out errors and contradictions.

## **II. Reasons to Believe:**

Now that we have defined what we mean by inerrancy (absolute truth), let's look briefly at three reasons to believe that the Bible is absolute truth.

### **1. What the Bible Claims about Itself'**

#### **The View of the Old Testament Writers**

The Old Testament writers saw their message as God-breathed and therefore utterly reliable. The Hebrew word for prophet means "a spokesman," and the prophet's message was on God's behalf: "This is what the Lord says." As a result they frequently so identified themselves with God that they spoke as though God Himself were actually speaking. *Isaiah 5* reveals this clearly. In verses 1–2 the prophet speaks of God in the third person (*He*), but in verses 3–6 Isaiah changes to speak in the first person (*I*). Isaiah was speaking the very words of God.

#### **The New Testament Agrees with the Old Testament**

Similarly, Paul accepted Isaiah's words as God Himself speaking to men: "The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers" (*Acts 28:25*).

Paul again points to the Bible's *Divine Authority* in his letter to the church at Thessalonica, 1 Thessalonians 2:13--<sup>13</sup> And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe.

## **Furthermore, Jesus Believed in Verbal Inspiration of the Scriptures**

In *John 10:34* Jesus quoted from *Psalms 82:6* and proclaimed that the words of this psalm were the words of God. Similarly, in *Matthew 22:31–32* He claimed the words of *Exodus 3:6* were given to them by God.

From these examples of both the OT and NT, it is clear that the Bible claims to be the Word of God and by staking this claim the Bible plainly declares its divine authority, and complete inerrancy.

### **Who Believes This?**

The belief the Bible is without error is not new. Clement of Rome in the first century wrote, “Look carefully into the Scriptures, which are the true utterances of the Holy Spirit. Observe that nothing of an unjust or counterfeit character is written in them.”<sup>4</sup> A century later, Irenaeus concluded, “The Scriptures are indeed perfect, since they were spoken by the Word of God and his Spirit.”<sup>5</sup>

This was the view of the early church leaders, and it has been the consistent view of evangelicals ever since

## **2. The second reason to believe the Bible is absolute truth is THE INDESTRUCTIBILITY OF THE BIBLE**

How a book which has been so universally attacked could survive is a miracle eloquently testifying to its supernatural origin.

The Bible does not appeal to the sinful nature of fallen man. It openly condemns sin, and debases the pride of man, so man is on a mission to discredit it. Because the Bible declares that salvation is by grace alone, other religions have sought to destroy it.

The Bible condemns every man and condones no man; it accuses every man and excuses no man; it abases human reason and exalts revelation; it repudiates the natural and rejoices in the spiritual, glorying not in flesh but in faith.

It has been attacked by scientists, Satanists, warriors, peacemakers, rulers and philosophers. Assaulted by every known plan of hell, it has come forth unscathed from the inferno. Like the three Hebrew children it has been in the fire and like them it has been wonderfully preserved and there is not a smell of burning upon it.

In the 1700s the French philosopher and writer, Voltaire, thought he had discredited the Bible and boasted that in one hundred years Christianity would be a museum piece. As a result, infidelity ran riot in France. Voltaire, however, passed screaming into eternity, but the Bible has not passed away. To add insult to injury, Voltaire's printing press was used to print the very Scriptures which he boasted he had demolished and his house became a depot for the Geneva Bible Society.

I believe the Bible is the Word of God because it stands indestructible against the most determined attacks of man through centuries of time.

### 3. THE VERACITY OF THE FULFILLED PROPHECY OF THE BIBLE

The Bible is unique. Hundreds of years before certain events took place, the Bible made precise predictions concerning those events. No other sacred book ventured to make such predictions. The Bible is the only book which dared to stake its claim to divinity on the accuracy of its prophecies.

The fulfilled prophecies of Scripture amply demonstrate the truth of this statement of Jehovah. While there are many examples of fulfilled prophecies in the Scriptures, I'd like to point out just one that is largely overlooked.

The court chaplain of Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, was asked by his royal master to prove the inspiration of the Scripture in a word. He answered, "Your Majesty, the Jews."

The Jewish race is the living monument to every generation that the Bible is the Book of God. Take, for example, the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy. Here we have predicted by Moses the tragic history of the rebellious Jewish nation.

Deut. 28:49-53,68—" <sup>49</sup>The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the ends of the earth, like an eagle swooping down, a nation whose language you will not understand, <sup>50</sup>a fierce-looking nation without respect for the old or pity for the young. <sup>51</sup>They will devour the young of your livestock and the crops of

your land until you are destroyed. They will leave you no grain, new wine or olive oil, nor any calves of your herds or lambs of your flocks until you are ruined. <sup>52</sup> They will lay siege to all the cities throughout your land until the high fortified walls in which you trust fall down. They will besiege all the cities throughout the land the LORD your God is giving you.

<sup>53</sup> Because of the suffering your enemy will inflict on you during the siege, you will eat the fruit of the womb, the flesh of the sons and daughters the LORD your God has given you... <sup>68</sup> The LORD will send you back in ships to Egypt on a journey I said you should never make again. There you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you.”

The Roman power here is clearly indicated by Moses, although that power had not yet come into being. Notice the mention of the eagle, the very symbol of Imperial Rome.

The invader was to be of a tongue unknown to the Jews. History affirms that the Jews were ignorant of Latin. The wars of the Jews with their many terrible sieges fulfill in every detail the awful predictions here made.

The return of the Jews to Egypt as slaves whom no one wanted to purchase was also fully realized. Those Jews who did not perish in the destruction of Jerusalem were shipped to Egypt. Josephus records that 100,000 Jewish slaves glutted the markets of Egypt. Hence the prophecy of Moses was fulfilled to its last detail, "no man shall buy you."

After even a brief consideration of the field of fulfilled prophecy, the absolute truth of the Bible is remarkably demonstrated.

### **III. Necessity for Absolute Truth.**

#### **Does It Matter?...ABSOLUTELY!**

Is the debate about whether or not the Bible can be trusted implicitly merely a theological quibble? Certainly not! The question of its ultimate authority is of tremendous importance for the Christian.

#### **Absolute truth Governs Our Confidence in the Truth of the Gospel**

If the Scripture is unreliable, can we offer the world a reliable gospel? How can we be sure of truth on any issue if we are suspicious of errors anywhere in the Bible? A pilot will ground his aircraft even on suspicion of the most minor fault, because he is aware that one fault destroys confidence in the complete machine. If the history contained in the Bible is wrong, how can we be sure the doctrine or moral teaching is correct?

The heart of the Christian message is history. The Incarnation (God becoming a man) was demonstrated by the Virgin Birth of Christ. Redemption (the price paid for our rebellion) was obtained by the death of Christ on the Cross. Reconciliation (the privilege of the sinner becoming a friend of God) was gained through the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ. If these recorded events are not true, how do we know the theology behind them is true?

#### **Absolute truth Governs Our Faith in the Value of Christ**

We cannot have a reliable Savior without a reliable Scripture. If, as many suggest, the stories in the Gospels are not historically true and the recorded words of Christ are only occasionally His, how do we know what we can trust about Christ? Must we rely upon the conflicting interpretations of a host of critical scholars before we know what Christ was like or what He taught? If the Gospel stories are merely the

result of the wishful thinking of the church in the second or third centuries, or even the personal views of the Gospel writers, then our faith no longer rests upon Jesus but upon the opinions of men. Who would trust an unreliable Savior for their eternal salvation?

### **Absolute truth Governs Our Response to the Conclusions of Science**

If we believe the Bible contains errors, then we will be quick to accept scientific theories that appear to prove the Bible wrong. In other words, we will allow the conclusions of science to dictate the accuracy of the Word of God. When we doubt the Bible's inerrancy, we have to invent new principles for interpreting Scripture that for convenience turn history into poetry and facts into myths. This means people must ask how reliable a given passage is when they turn to it. Only then will they be able to decide what to make of it. On the other hand, if we believe in inerrancy, we will test by Scripture the hasty theories that often come to us in the name of science.

### **Absolute truth Governs Our Attitude to the Preaching of Scripture**

A denial of biblical inerrancy always leads to a loss of confidence in Scripture both in the pulpit and in the pew. If the Bible's history is doubtful and its words are open to dispute, then people understandably lose confidence in it. People want authority. They want to know what God has said.

### **Conclusion**

A church without the authority of Scripture is like a crocodile without teeth; it can open its mouth as wide and as often as it likes—but who cares? Thankfully, God has given us His inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word. His people can speak with authority and boldness, and we can be confident we have His instructions for our

lives. We have absolute truth as our foundation— let us now put it to good use and build our faith upon it.