

THE DOCTRINE OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

(De Scriptura Sacra)

A Look at What the Bible Says by
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1. THE BIBLE IS THE ONLY SOURCE AND STANDARD OF FAITH

Throughout history there has been one and only one way of salvation, and that is through faith in God's promise of forgiveness in Christ, **"For there is no other name under heaven given among men, by which we must be saved"** (Acts 4:12). And, the words, **"Search the scriptures; for in them you think that you have eternal life: and they are they that testify of me,"** tell us that Scripture was written to testify of Christ (John 5:39). Furthermore, because salvation has been through faith in Christ from the beginning, the true church of Jesus Christ, the sum total of all who are saved through faith in Him, existed long before the day of Pentecost, long before Scripture was written. That is why we are told that **it was by faith that, "Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain," and by faith that, "he was declared to be righteous"** (Hebrews 11:4). And, that is why the Bible says, **"If there had been a law given that could have given life,**

righteousness truly would have been by the law. But Scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise might be given to those who believe, through faith in Jesus Christ” (Galatians 3:21-22).

Long before the Bible was written the words, **“And a son was also born to Seth; and he called his name Enos, then men began to call upon the name of the LORD,”** tell us that men knew about God and were calling upon Him at that time (Genesis 4:26). However, after God had His prophets put His Word in writing, His people were warned **“You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor shall you take anything from it”** (Deuteronomy 4:2). [See Deut. 12:32, Josh. 1:7 and 23:6.] Only God can add to His Word. And, the words, **“You are... built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone,”** tell us that the completed Scriptures, the writings of **“the apostles and prophets,”** are the **foundation** for our faith (Ephesians 2:19-20), for it is, **“Through their word,”** that we “believe” (John 17:20). As it is written, **“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”** (Romans 10:17).

Because the Bible was written so that, “You may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe in the name of the Son of God,” Satan is continually at work trying to lead people away from what the Bible says (1John 5:13). And, he generally does that by substituting some other authority disguised as reason, tradition, or new revelation.

Human Reason

The absurdity of man attempting to make his own mind the arbiter of all truth can be illustrated by comparing our puny sin-corrupted mind to that of an ant. Suppose that you could communicate with an ant. Suppose further that you gave that ant a revelation, telling it things about the world and yourself that it could never possibly know apart from that revelation. What would you think of that ant if it then said, “I don’t know if I believe everything you have said. I will decide for myself which parts to believe or reject”? Would you think that ant was stupid and egotistic? Well that is exactly what God thinks of people who react to His Word that way. That is why Jesus said, **“O fools, and slow of heart to believe everything the prophets have said”** (Luke 24:25). And, that is why the Bible says, **“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools”** (Romans 1:22). We have a God whose knowledge is so great that the, **“hairs of your head are all numbered”** (Luke 12:7). So great that compared to Him we are far lower

than an ant is when compared to us. Or as Job put it, **“How much less man, who is a maggot? and the son of man, who is a worm?”** (Job 25:6).

At this point someone is likely to say, “God has given us our mind and the ability to reason, and He expects us to use it,” and that is perfectly true. However, we need to know the limitations of our knowledge, and be aware of how easily our own sinful heart can deceive us. As it is written, **“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”** (Jeremiah 17:9). That is why theologians make a distinction between the **ministerial and the magisterial** use of reason. The ministerial use of reason is the humble attempt of a believer to learn and accept what God has said in His Word. In contrast, the magisterial use of reason involves every attempt of man to claim knowledge beyond his ken, to profess himself to be wise, to set his own opinions over the Word of God, to make his own worldview the arbiter of truth, or to invent his own religion. Of all such attempts the Bible says, **“The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God”** (1Corinthians 3:19).

From the point of view of man’s ignorance and sinful pride the Gospel itself is foolish. As it is written, **“The world through its wisdom did not know God... But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks; But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men”** (1Corinthians 1:21-25). Therefore, we need to counter every attempt of sinful man to exalt man’s word over God’s Word, to cast doubt on the words of Scripture, to contradict what the Bible says, to interpret the Bible to make it fit human opinion, or to read unscriptural ideas into the words of Scripture. The words, **“If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free,”** tell us that those who are truly Christ’s disciples will never look outside of His Word for spiritual truth, or attempt to supplement what the Bible says (John 8:31-32).

Now as I mentioned before, God expects us to apply our reason to learn and accept what He has said in His Word. However, the words, **“We have not written anything to you, other than what you read,”** tell us that the message God wants us to get from His Word is nothing other than what the words plainly say (2Corinthians 1:13). In other words, He wants you to place the same meaning on His words that you are placing on my words as you read this, for I am not writing to you anything “other than what you read”. Furthermore, the words, **“No truth of scripture comes from any**

private explanation,” tell us our made-up explanations are worthless (2Peter 1:20). The only valid explanations of any passage of Scripture are those God has given us in Scripture. For example: If someone reads the words, **“Christ died for our sins,”** and does not understand what they mean, it would be foolish for him to just make up an explanation. Instead, he should just accept what those words say as true, and ponder them as he continues to study God’s Word. If he does that God Himself will give Him understanding as he reads other passages, such as, **“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities,”** or **“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross,”** or **“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us of all sin”** (Isaiah 53:5, Colossians 2:14, 1John 1:7). In short, the safest explanation of any passage is to say that it means the same thing as another passage. If we do that, even if we are wrong our explanation will still be the Word of God.

The words, **“Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ,”** tell us that man’s word should never be placed above the Word of God (2Corinthians 10:5). As far as God is concerned, any scientist who contradicts what God’s Word says is just as ignorant as that ant I previously mentioned. Those who, in the name of reason, claim that miracles are impossible because they contradict “the laws of nature” only show their ignorance because **intelligent beings override “the laws of nature” all the time.** For example: It is contrary to the laws of nature for wood, clay, plaster and other materials to form themselves into a house. Because it is contrary to “the laws of nature” it will never happen by itself. However, **intelligent beings cause what would never happen naturally to happen.** Likewise, in the case of miracles, God uses His intelligence and ability to cause something to happen that would never happen on its own.

Those who, in the name of reason, claim that the Bible cannot be the Word of God because it contradicts itself, again only show their ignorance. While it is true that an actual contradiction would be an error, very often things that appear contradictory to us only appear contradictory because of our ignorance. For example: Suppose that you heard me say, “The Mississippi river flows south from Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico,” and later say, “I stood on the bank of the Mississippi river and watched it flowing north on its way to the sea”. If you jumped up and said, “Ah ha, you contradicted yourself,” you would only be showing your ignorance, because the Mississippi river does flow north in some places, one of them being in the northwest corner of Tennessee. The point I am making is that just

because something seems like a contradiction to our puny finite minds does not mean it actually is a contradiction. And, when it comes to God's Word there are no real contradictions, only passages that men interpret to contradict when they could just as well be interpreted to agree.

Those who, in the name of reason, claim that what the Bible says cannot be true because it contradicts science again only show their ignorance. If they would actually look at the evidence, they would find that even though the opinions of men often contradict Scripture, the facts never do. Facts may be interpreted to contradict Scripture, but in every case they could just as well be interpreted to agree with it. Moreover, much of what is currently called science is nothing more than atheist religion being passed off as science. For example: Charles Darwin believed that life originated in a warm little pond. At the time he thought that idea was scientific, but it now contradicts science. A number of experiments by Francisco Redi (1626-1697), Louis Pasteur (1822-1895), and others convinced the scientific community that life does not come from non-living chemicals. Nevertheless, atheist religion – falsely called science – continues to hold to Darwin's dream of a warm little pond (1Timothy 6:20). Likewise, Darwin (who knew nothing of genetics) saw small changes in animals (such as finches with different size beaks) and assumed that such changes had no limit. However, modern genetics tells us that there is a limit. Because of that limit one kind of animal cannot change into an entirely different kind. Nevertheless, atheist religion – falsely called science – continues to claim that all life evolved from non-living chemicals (1Timothy 6:20). The atheists have no evidence! In fact, the evidence is against them. They simply reject the evidence, and "**Holdback the truth in unrighteousness,**" as the Bible says (Romans 1:18).

The Traditions of Men

When it comes to the authority of the "Church" or tradition, we need to distinguish between indifferent matters – matters neither commanded or forbidden by God's Word – (such as the color of the carpet), and matters on which God's Word is clear. The words, "**To the law and to the testimony: if they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,**" tell us that no "Church" has the authority to contradict what the Bible says (Isaiah 8:20). As it is written, "**If anyone teaches otherwise, and will not agree with sound teaching, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine that is in accord with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing**" (1Timothy 6: 3). As far as tradition is concerned, many traditions are benign, and a respect for tradition often gives people a sense of

stability and permanence. However, the words, **“If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,”** tell us that traditions which contradict the Word of God are of the devil (Isaiah 8:20). The tradition of the Pharisees often amounted to nothing more than rationalizing sin. Of such tradition Jesus said, **“Why are you transgressing the commandment of God by your tradition?”** (Matthew 15:3). And, the words, **“If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples,”** tell us **Christ does not want us looking for truth outside of His Word** (John 8:20).

The words, **“Do not be called masters: for you have one Master, even Christ,”** tell us that Christ’s Word (the Bible) should be the highest authority in any “Church” (Matthew 23:10). Those who are unwilling to accept that rule often appeal to the words, **“Stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle”** (2Thessalonians 2:15). However, because the truth will never contradict itself, **no tradition actually taught by the Apostles will ever contradict what the Bible says.** And, the words, **“You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor shall you take anything from it,”** tell us that any tradition that adds to God’s Word or explains away what it says is not of God (Deuteronomy 4:2). **“The Christian Church has no authority whatever to teach any doctrine besides and beyond the Word of its divine Master Jesus Christ, laid down in the writings of His prophets and apostles.”** (John Theodore Mueller, *“Christian Dogmatics”*, page 94.)

New Revelations

The words, **“Even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any gospel to you other than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed,”** warn us of the danger inherent in “new revelations” (Galatians 1:8). Since everything necessary for our salvation is set forth in Scripture passages so clear that they need no interpretation, nothing further is needed for our salvation. If an alleged revelation affirms what the Bible already says then it is superfluous. If it contradicts what the Bible says it will only hinder the work of the Gospel. In the past, false prophets, popes and others have claimed to be guided by God when they were contradicting His Word. However, the words, **“Let God be true, but every man a liar;”** tell us to regard anyone who contradicts what the Bible says as a liar (Romans 3:4). And the words, **“Do not add to His words, lest He reprove you, and you are found to be a liar,”** for, **“All liars, will have their part in the lake that burns with fire,”** should make every false prophet tremble, for, **“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”** (Proverbs 30:6,

Revelation 21:8, Hebrews 10:31). Am I saying that a false prophet can never be saved? Not at all! God may, **“Give them repentance bringing them to a realization of the truth”** (2Timothy 2:25). However, they need to realize how serious their sin is. And, the words, **“It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea, with a millstone tied around his neck, than for him to cause one of these little ones to fall away,”** should be a warning to them all (Luke 17:2).

That brings us to another kind of new revelation that is widespread in American churches, the claim that God is speaking in, “A still small voice”. The voice that these people hear is not an audible voice, but a “voice” in their head. However, the Bible says nothing about voices in the head! It is called, “A still small voice” because that is the way God’s word to Elijah was described in 1Kings 19:12, at least in the King James translation. However, there is nothing in that passage, or anywhere else in Scripture, that speaks of an inaudible voice in the head. The English Standard Version translates those words as, “A low whisper”. That being said, I have experienced what seemed like an inaudible voice, as many others have. Sometimes, when praying about a matter I would be reminded of a Bible passage, or assured that things will be alright. Nevertheless, when people start seeking God’s direction apart from His Word they open themselves up to satanic deception. That really came across to me some years ago when I encountered people who claimed to believe in salvation by grace, but lived in constant fear that God would punish them if they did not “obey” every command that He gave them through “A still small voice” in their head. That is nothing more than a warmed-over version of works righteousness. I have also encountered people (and been told of others) who claim that God told them do things that were clearly contrary to His Word (like divorcing their spouse etc.). I have encountered others who claimed that God had given them an interpretation of Scripture, when their interpretation did not fit the context or the grammar, and contradicted what the Bible said elsewhere. All such interpretations are condemned by the words, **“He who has my word, let him speak my word faithfully”** (Jeremiah 23:28). **“Jesus said... If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples,”** and those words tell us that a true disciple of Christ will never look outside of God’s Word for guidance (John 8:31). Furthermore, the words, **“No truth of scripture comes from any private explanation,”** tell us that the Holy Spirit will never give us our own private explanation of something He said in Scripture (2Peter 1:20). And, the words, **“We have not written anything to you, other than what you read,”** tell us that God wants us to pay attention to what His words say, instead of looking for explanations (2Corinthians

1:13). Rather than giving us explanations the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to see what the words plainly say – the meaning that is there for everyone.

2. HOLY SCRIPTURE IS THE WORD OF GOD

Unlike all other books in the world, the Holy Bible (the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments) is the Word of God. It is the Word of God in the same way that the writings of George Washington are his word, and the writings of Abraham Lincoln are his word. Through the words, **“Search the scriptures; for in them you think that you have eternal life: and they are they that testify of me,”** Jesus tells us that the Bible was written to testify of him (John 5:39). And, the words, **“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God,”** tell us that God gives us everlasting life through His Word (Luke 4:4). As it is written, **“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”** (Romans 10:17).

The words, **“Unto them [the Jews] was committed the word of God,”** tell us that the Hebrew Scriptures are Word of God (Romans 3:2). Jesus’ words, **“Everything must be fulfilled, that was written in the law of Moses, in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me,”** tell us that because the Old Testament is the Word of God, “everything” it says about Christ had to be “fulfilled” (Luke 24:44). [Note: the phrase, “In the law of Moses, in the prophets, and in the psalms,” refers to the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible, and was a way of saying, “In all of the Scriptures”.]

Regarding the fulfillment of God’s word, the words, **“Until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter or stroke will pass from the law, until everything has been fulfilled,”** tell us that even the letters and strokes are the Word of God, and that all that is written will be fulfilled (Matthew 5:18). The words, **“All this took place, to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin will be with child, and will bring forth a son, and they will call His name Emmanuel,”** tell us that Christ was born in fulfillment of Scripture (Matthew 1:22-23 - See Isaiah 7:14). The words, **“Fulfilling what was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, who said, Out of Egypt have I called my son,”** tell us that the words of the prophet were the words of God, and the flight of Mary, Joseph and Jesus to Egypt took place in fulfillment of Scripture (Matthew 2:15 - See Hosea 11:1). The words, **“None of them is lost, except the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled,”** tell us that Judas betrayed Christ in fulfillment of Scripture (John 17:12). And, the words, **“Do you think that I cannot call on my Father, and He would at once give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the scriptures**

be fulfilled, that say it must be so?" tell us that Christ's own suffering and death took place in fulfillment of Scripture (Matthew 26:53-54).

The words, **"Lord... You said through the mouth of your servant David, Why do the heathen rage, and the people plot in vain?"** tell us that the words of David (quoted from Psalm 2:1) were spoken by God (Acts 4:24-25). The words, **"The Holy Spirit rightly said to our fathers through Isaiah the prophet,"** tell us that words spoken by Isaiah the prophet were spoken by the Holy Ghost (Acts 28:25). [See Isaiah 6:9.] The words, **"As the Holy Ghost says, Today if you hear Him speak do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion,"** tell us that the words of Psalm 95:7-8 are the words of the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 3:7-8). The words, **"What advantage then has the Jew? or what profit is there in circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because the words of God were entrusted to them,"** call the scriptures entrusted to God's people in the Old Testament, "the words of God" (Romans 3:1-2). And, the words, **"To the law and to the testimony: if they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,"** tell us that those who contradict Scripture have "no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

Consider carefully the words, **"Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into,"** (1Peter 1:10-12). Those words tell us that the same "Spirit of Christ" who spoke through the prophets, was speaking through the apostles.

The words, **"Therefore, brethren, stand firm, and hold fast to the instructions that you were taught, either by what we said, or our letter,"** tell us that the writings of the apostles carry the same God-given authority as if they were speaking in person (2Thessalonians 2:15). The words, **"You want proof that Christ is speaking through me,"** tell us that Christ was speaking through the apostles (2Corinthians 13:3). The words, **"If any man thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man will not hear what I have said, refuse to hear him,"** tell us that the words

of the apostles are the words of God, and we should not listen to those who refuse to heed what they say (1Corinthians 14:37-38). The words, **“Those who know God accept what we say; those who are not of God will not accept what we say. That is how we can distinguish the spirit of truth from the spirit of error,”** tell us that those who will not accept what the Bible says have a spirit of error (1John 4:6). And, the words, **“You are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and the household of God, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone,”** accord the Old testament writings of the prophets equal authority with the New Testament writings of the apostles (Ephesians 2:19-20).

3. THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

What the Bible says about its divine inspiration is not just an opinion, but an essential part of the Gospel message. God uses the passages of Scripture that testify to its inspiration to assure troubled hearts of His love, His mercy, and His promise of forgiveness in Christ. As it is written, **“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God”** (Romans 8:16).

If you have a Bible program on your computer, and **do a search** for such phrases as “thus saith the Lord”, “the word of the Lord”, “the Lord said”, or “the word of God” you will find dozens of Bible passages that testify to the divine origin of what the Bible says. Furthermore, we are told that, **“The words of the LORD are pure words [i.e. not mixed with man’s word], as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times,”** and given the promise, **“You shall keep them, O LORD, you will preserve them from this generation forever”** (Psalm 12:6-7). And, the words, **“All scripture is inspired by God,”** tell us that every word of scripture comes from God (2Timothy 3:16). For, **“Prophecy did not originate of old by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”** (2Peter 1:21).

The words, **“We have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God. That is what we speak, not in words taught by man’s wisdom, but those taught by the Holy Spirit,”** testify to the fact that the Apostles were speaking words given to them by “the Holy Spirit” (1Corinthians 2:12-13). The words, **“You want proof that Christ is speaking through me,”** testify to the fact that Christ was speaking through

the Apostle Paul (2Corinthians 13:3). And, the words, **“If any man thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write to you are the commandments of the Lord,”** testify to the fact that what Paul wrote was the Word of God (1Corinthians 14:37).

When the Bible tells us that, **“All scripture is inspired by God,”** the phrase translated “inspired by God” means “God breathed” in the original Greek. And, that means that it owes its origin to God even though it was recorded by men (2Timothy 3:16). When the Bible says, **“Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,”** it is telling us that it was the actual words (not just ideas) that were inspired (2Peter 1:21). Moreover, the phrase, “spoke as they were moved,” is not limited to oral communication. The deaf often speak through sign language, and I am speaking to you through the words you are reading. Furthermore, because the Doctrine of inspiration is an essential part of the Gospel message, those who attack it, deny it, or water it down endanger souls. As it is written, **“I do not pray for them alone, but also for those who will believe on me through their word;”** (John 17:20).

The words, **“If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced, even if someone rises from the dead,”** tell us that our salvation depends upon believing what the Bible says (Luke 16:31). As it is written, **“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”** (Romans 10:17). Moreover, the words, **“You are... built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;”** tell us that our faith is founded on the word of “the apostles and prophets” [i.e. the Bible] (Ephesians 2:19-20). And, the words, **“If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free,”** tell us that the truth that makes us free, the truth of the Gospel, is not to be found outside of God’s Word (John 8:31-32).

King David said, **“The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was in my tongue”** (2Samuel 23:2). And, the words, **“They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them,”** tell us that the Holy Ghost did not just give those present at Pentecost ideas, but the actual words needed to express them (Acts 2:4). While it is true that God will, in answer to prayer, sometimes help pastors and other believers find the words needed to communicate the truths of Scripture, those who would reduce divine inspiration to mere assistance

undermine the work of the Gospel by casting doubt on God's word, thereby endangering souls. To all of them God's warning is, **"Whoever offends one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea"** (Matthew 18:6).

Because the Bible is the inspired Word of God we can **know** that what it says is true. And, that is just what the words, **"I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life,"** tell us (1John 5:13). Furthermore, even though man's word is often broken, because Scripture is the Word of God, Jesus said, **"Scripture cannot be broken"** (John 10:35). Because every word of Scripture is inspired by God, **"It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one letter of the law to fail"** (Luke 16:17). **"For I tell you truly, Until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter or stroke will pass from the law, until everything has been fulfilled"** (Matthew 5:18). That is why the Apostle Paul could say, **"I worship the God of my fathers... believing everything that is written in the law and in the prophets"** (Acts 24:14).

The words, **"The promises were made to Abraham and his seed. God did not say, and to your seeds, as referring to many; but, And to your seed, referring to one which is Christ,"** tell us that not only the words but the form is determined by God (Galatians 3:16). [See Genesis 22:18 and 26:4.] Furthermore, because we know that the promised "seed" of Abraham was Christ, we also know that God's promise to multiply that one "seed" is fulfilled in all who are the children of Abraham through faith in Christ. As it is written, **"If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"** (Galatians 3:29). That Includes all in ancient Israel who trusted in Christ (the Messiah).

Lastly, the words, **"Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,"** tell us that divine inspiration included not only the command to write, but also the divine impulse to write (2Peter 1:21). Because of that divine impulse, **"prophecy did not originate of old by the will of man," but by the will of God** (2Peter 1:21). Therefore, **"Let God be true, but every man a liar"** (Romans 3:4). **"To the law and to the testimony: if they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them"** (Isaiah 8:20).

4. THE HOLY SPIRIT'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE WRITERS

All of the passages that tell us that the Lord (or the Holy Spirit) spoke by the prophets reveal the relationship of Holy Spirit to the Holy writers. The words, **“All this took place, to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet,”** and the words, **“Fulfilling what was spoken of the Lord by the prophet,”** tell us that the Lord was doing the talking even though the words came through the prophet (Matthew 1:22 and 2:15). The words, **“Lord... You said through the mouth of your servant David,”** and the words, **“The Holy Ghost long ago spoke by the mouth of David,”** tell us that what was spoken was the Word of God even though it came through David (Acts 4:24-25). And, the words, **“As the Holy Ghost says, Today if you hear Him speak, do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert,”** tell us that the words of the Psalm being quoted are the words of the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 3:7-8 and Psalm 95:8).

History may very well remember our age as an age of skepticism, an age when many were so infatuated with their own thoughts that without ever speaking one word through divine inspiration they denied its supernatural aspects, limited (in their minds) God's ability to control what was said, and described inspiration in terms of their own experience. To all who are guilty of that charge God says, **“O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken”** (Luke 24:25). **“Hasn't God made the wisdom of this world foolish?”** (1Corinthians 1:20) **“Hasn't God ‘Scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts’?”** (Luke 1:51) If you encounter such skeptics, do not be deceived, on the contrary, **“Let God be true, but every man a liar”** (Romans 3:4). For it is written, **“If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them”** (Isaiah 8:20).

“It is fundamentally vital that we realize that this Bible is Christ's Word, God's Word, a divine Book; that, unlike the many volumes published in the United States last year, here is a book that came into existence not ‘by the will of man,’ but, as the apostle tells us, by the immeasurable and unending love of God to give His weak and inconsistent children a positive and unfailing guide through the perplexities of the here into the hereafter. — Externally, of course, the Bible has much the same appearance as any other volume of its size and proportions. But because it is God-breathed; because, as we are expressly assured, ‘all Scripture is given by inspiration’; because the men who wrote the various books of the Bible ;spoke as they were

moved by the Holy Ghost,' we believe that the Bible, as 2,600 different passages of the Old Testament and 526 different references in the New individually claim, presents to us the Word of God, written by men who were chosen and supernaturally endowed by God for that purpose and who, through the divine process of inspiration, were given the exact, literal messages they have recorded for us." (Dr. Walter A. Maier, from the sermon, "*Christ's Estimate Of The Scriptures,*" 1930.)

5. ATTACKS ON THE DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION

For centuries the Bible was only available to scribes and scholars. During that time the common people had little or no access to it. However, almost as soon as it was translated into the language of the people, and made available by the printing press, Satan raised up men to attack it.

The words, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," tell us that faith in the words of Scripture and faith in Christ go hand in hand. And, because they go hand in hand Satan is intent on destroying people's confidence in Scripture. Very often the men Satan uses are highly respected, have positions of influence, and are regarded as scholars. Nevertheless, the words, "**Those who are not of God will not accept what we [the Apostles and Prophets] say,**" tell us that such "scholars" are not of God (1John 4:6). The words, "**There must also be heresies among you, to reveal those who are approved by God,**" tell us that they are not approved by God (1Corinthians 11:19). And, the words, "**If anyone teaches otherwise, and will not agree with sound teaching, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine that is in accord with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing... from such withdraw yourself,**" tell us that we should not listen to them or have any fellowship with them (1Timothy 6:3-5).

Writing over a century ago, before the Second World War, Dr. John Theodore Mueller said: "In Germany there is at the present time hardly a single outstanding university professor who still upholds the doctrine of verbal and plenary inspiration. This all but universal denial of inspiration is one of the saddest chapters in the history of the Christian Church; for every one who repudiates the inspiration of the Bible subverts the foundation upon which the Christian faith rests and falls under the condemnation of God. In the last analysis all objections to the inspiration of the Bible flow from the carnal, unbelieving heart." ("*Christian Dogmatics,*" page 108). In my opinion,

that apostasy in Germany was one of the reasons that the people were so willing to follow Hitler.

Those who deny that Scripture is inspired because the individual writers differ somewhat in style and diction “**err, not knowing the Scriptures, or the power of God**” (Matthew 22:29). What they fail to understand is that every person has their own personal language. My vocabulary is bound to differ somewhat from yours. And, God prepared the men that He chose to write down His words, by molding their vocabulary, and giving them the style and diction He wanted to use. What skeptics miss is that, “God's unique style is indeed noticeable throughout Holy Scripture, which bears the ineffaceable imprint of its divine Author on every page. The simplicity, majesty, and sublimity of the Biblical style are found in no book written by men; in fact, the style of the Bible is so unique that there is only one Holy Bible in the world. We may apply to Scripture the words that were spoken with regard to our Savior: ‘**Never man spoke like this man,**’ John 7:46.” (J. T. Mueller, “*Christian Dogmatics*”, page 109.) The words, “**It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one letter of the law to fail,**” tell us that every letter is there because God put it there (Luke 16:17). There are no uninspired parts.

All of the attacks on Scripture are condemned by the words, “**O fools, and slow of heart to believe everything the prophets have said**” (Luke 24:25).

Some have argued that research on the part of Luke precludes inspiration. But, what research Luke may have done does not change the fact that it was God who moved Him to write it down. As it is written, “**Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost**” (2Peter 1:21).

Some have argued that variant readings in copies of scripture disprove inspiration. But, those variant readings are in copies (not the original), and they affect only a tiny percentage of the readings. Furthermore, we have God’s own promise that He will “Preserve” what He has written (Psalm 12:6-7).

Some have argued that alleged contradictions disprove inspiration. However, I have already explained that just because two statements seem contradictory to our puny sin-corrupted minds does not mean that they actually contradict. Many times we simply lack the information needed to understand how they fit together. In fact, the words, “**Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own conceit,**” are God’s way of telling

us that just because two statements appear to contradict does not mean they actually contradict (Proverbs 26:4-5).

Some have argued that seeming historical discrepancies in Scripture disprove inspiration. However, in the last century so many specific claims of historical inaccuracy have been proven false that I am surprised that anyone would still use that argument. A little over a century ago historians were claiming that the Hittite kingdom never existed. Then archeologists discovered it. Not many decades ago some claimed that Pontius Pilate did not exist. Then a stone was found with his name on it. The truth is that as long as secular scholars do not have non-biblical evidence for something the Bible says, they think they can accuse that Bible of being wrong without any danger of their lie being exposed. To all of them **Jesus says, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe everything the prophets have said,”** (Luke 24:25). As Christians we know that the opinions of men are often wrong, but the Bible never is.

Some have argued that inaccurate quotations of the Old Testament by writers of the New disprove inspiration. However, that is silly because they are trying to impose their rules on God. Sometimes the Apostles translate from the Hebrew. Sometimes they quote from the Greek Septuagint translation. Sometimes they quote the Septuagint corrected by the Hebrew. And, sometimes they restate the text in their own words. However, in every case they are saying exactly what the Holy Spirit moved them to say (2Peter 1:21).

And finally, some have argued that Paul’s statement, **“To the rest speak I, not the Lord,”** disproves inspiration (1Corinthians 7:12). However, all Paul is saying is, “This is my counsel on a matter that God has not specifically spoken on”. Furthermore, his words, **“If any man thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write to you are the commandments of the Lord,”** tell us that God caused Paul to include that counsel in Scripture (1Corinthians 14:37).

6. THE CONSEQUENCES OF DENYING INSPIRATION

The satanic attack on Scripture has taken its toll on many churches, especially those with a history of affirming some passages of Scripture while explaining away others. As a result, practicing Christians make up a far smaller portion of our population than they previously did, and many who pass themselves off as Christian scholars do not feel bound to regard anything the Bible says as sacred.

One very visible aspect of that departure from Scripture is the world's denial of the first chapters of Genesis – God's record of creation, and the age of the earth. And, because that denial is forcefully advanced many are taken in by it. Nevertheless, the words, **“He who is of God hears God's words... you do not hear them, because you are not of God,”** tell us that those who reject what the Bible says about creation are not of God (John 8:47).

What Christians who have bought into the lie of evolution and millions of years fail to realize, is that by rejecting what the Bible says about God creating all things in six days, they are rejecting the God who made everything **“In six days,”** and replacing Him with a god of their own fabrication – a god who used evolution (Exodus 20:11). In short, **they change “the truth of God into a lie,”** (Romans 1:25). As a result, those churches that reject the Genesis record, eventually slide down the slippery slope of rejecting the truth of Christ's virgin birth, His atoning sacrifice, and His resurrection while going on to condone all sorts of satanic behavior (immorality, abortion, homosexuality and even the farce of homosexual “marriage”). To all of the so called Christians who have gone that route, God says, **“They commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one repents of his wickedness: all of them are like Sodom in my sight, and the people of the city like Gomorrah”** (Jeremiah 23:14).

The words, **“This is a trustworthy statement, worthy of complete acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,”** tell us that the very reason Christ came into the world was to save sinners (1Timothy 1:15). However, those who reject the Bible's record of creation and the fall have no reason to believe the Bible when it says, **“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,”** and, therefore, have no reason to believe the Bible when it says, **“As through the sin of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so through the righteousness of one the free gift abounds to all men bringing justification and life”** (Romans 5:12 and 18). In short, rejecting what the Bible says about creation and the fall undermines the Gospel.

The words, **“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God,”** the words, **“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God,”** and the words, **“He chose to give us life through the Word of Truth,”** all tell us that those who reject God's

Word cut themselves off from God's "gift" of faith and eternal life (Romans 10:17, 1Peter 1:23, James 1:18).

The words, **"If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you,"** tell us that those who reject God's Word forfeit Christ's promise of answered prayer (John 15:7). And, the words, **"Truly, truly, I tell you, if a man keeps My word, he will never see death,"** tell us that those who reject God's Word forfeit the promise of never seeing death (John 8:51).

The words, **"You have the words of eternal life,"** tell us that God's words are the source of eternal life (John 6:68). The words, **"Sanctify them through your truth: your Word is truth,"** tell us that we are sanctified through the Word of God (John 17:17). The words, **"Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God, and keep it,"** tell us that God's Word is a source of blessing (Luke 11:28). And, the words, **"Truly, truly, I tell you, He who hears my word, and believes on Him who sent me, has everlasting life, and will not come into condemnation; but has passed from death to life,"** give all who trust in God's Word His own promise that we "will not come into condemnation" (John 5:24).

Lastly, those who reject God's word, reject, **"The wisdom that is from above,"** the wisdom, **"God ordained before the world to our glory,"** the wisdom, **"Which none of the rulers of this world knew, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory,"** the wisdom of which it is said, **"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, the things that God has prepared for those who love Him"** (James 3:17, 1Corinthians 2:7-9). And, the future of all who reject those blessings of God's Word is described in the words, **"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"** (Hebrews 10:31).

7. THE PROPERTIES OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

Up to this point our focus has been on the divine origin of the Bible, its inspiration, and the fact that every part of it is God-breathed. I pointed out that the words, **"It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one letter of the law to fail,"** tell us that even the letters were inspired by God (Luke 16:17). However, because the Bible is the Word of God it also possesses certain properties or attributes which we will now look at.

The first two properties that I call to your attention are the divine **truthfulness and unity** of Scripture. While the sections following this one will focus on some of the other attributes of Scripture, because these two

properties are closely related to, and dovetail perfectly with, the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture, much that can be said about them has already been said.

Regarding **the truthfulness of Scripture**, because the Bible is the Word of God, and **“God... cannot lie,”** all that the Bible says is true (Titus 1:2). And, all of the Bible passages that testify to the divine inspiration of Scripture also testify to its truthfulness. As to its truthfulness, Jesus Himself, in prayer to the Father, said, **“Your word is truth”** (John 17:17). In the Psalms we read, **“Your law is the truth, // Your word is true from the beginning: and every one of your righteous judgments endures forever, // the word of the LORD is right, and you can trust everything He does”** (Psalm 119:142,160 and Psalm 33:4).

Regarding **the unity of Scripture**, even though God moved men to write down the words, because the words were inspired by God the Bible is the Word of God. And, because God is its real author, the Bible only contains one theology, His theology. And, His Word testifies to that fact when it says, **“All the prophets testify of Him [Christ] that through His name whoever believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins”** (Acts 10:43). Jesus Himself said, **“Search the scriptures; for in them you think that you have eternal life: and they are they that testify of me”** (John 5:39). David said, **“I have trusted in your mercy [grace], my heart will rejoice in your salvation”** (Psalm 13:5). Paul taught, **“Nothing other than those things that Moses and the prophets said would happen”** (Acts 26:22). Isaiah said, **“Whoever believes in Him [Christ] will not be ashamed”** (Isaiah 28:16, Romans 10:11). And, the Apostle Paul tells us that **“The covenant concerning faith in Christ, that was confirmed by God at the time of Abraham, cannot be nullified by the law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, so as to make the promise of no effect, for if the inheritance comes by the law, it is not given by promise, but God gave it to Abraham by promise”** (Galatians 3:17-19).

One attack on the inspiration of Scripture that I have not yet dealt with is **the attack on the divine unity of Scripture**. This attack assumes that the Bible is not inspired by God, and, therefore, that there must be a natural explanation for its existence, and that the men who wrote it must have had differences in their thinking. Some who accept that assumption then let their imagination run wild, twisting some statements to contradict others when they could just as well be interpreted to agree. And, by doing so they only show their ignorance, because they violate one of the fundamental rules of Bible interpretation, the rule that no passage of Scripture should ever be

interpreted to contradict what the Bible says elsewhere. As it is written, “**If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them**” (Isaiah 8:20).

The people I have in mind pick out statements made by different Apostles, and then claim to see different theologies, theologies that only exist in their minds. Others imagine that the first two chapters of Genesis give different accounts of creation, even though Christ’s words, “**He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this reason a man will leave father and mother, and will be united to his wife,**” quote from both chapters as from one account (Matthew 19:4-5). Others ignore the historical evidence pointing to Moses as the writer of the first five books of Scripture, and then, out of pure fantasy, fabricate different writers for different parts of the Pentateuch. Of course their entire construct is nothing more than the product of an overactive imagination (a fairy story), yet they prefer their lie to the truth. For that reason, their attack on the unity of Scripture is a perfect illustration of the words, “**God... has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts**” (Luke 1:47, 51). And, the words, “**Those who know God accept what we [the apostles and prophets] say, those who are not of God will not accept what we say,**” tell us that those people are not of God (1John 4:6).

A Guide to Interpreting God’s Word

The properties of Holy Scripture guide us in our interpretation of Scripture. For example: Because one of its properties is its **unity**, we should never interpret one passage of scripture to contradict another. Because it has the **authority** of God behind it, we should conform our thinking to it while rejecting any interpretation that contradicts what it says. Because its **purpose** is to testify of Christ, we should interpret all that it says in the light of its testimony of Christ. Because it is **sufficient**, containing everything needed for our salvation, we should never try to supplement what it says, or read unscriptural ideas into it. And, because it is **clear**, the meaning God intends for us to get from it is exactly what the words say, nothing more, the plain grammatical meaning of the words, the same meaning that you are placing on my words as you read this.

A. THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

Because the Bible is the Word of God, it is the highest authority in the Christian church, an authority that can and should be the only source, standard and judge of all that is taught in our churches. That authority, the

authority of God's own Word, has a twofold function. **1-** In the life of a believer that Word convicts the heart of sin, while assuring the contrite (those who are sorry for their sin) of God's mercy and forgiveness in Christ. **2-** In the life of the church, that Word exposes doctrines that are not taught in Scripture, while condemning doctrines that contradict Scripture. [See Micah 3:8, Psalm 34:18, Romans 15:4, Acts 17:11, Isaiah 8:20.]

God's Word in the Life of a Believer

Because Scripture is the Word of God, it is empowered by God to accomplish His will. Of course, part of that will is to bring people to faith. However, after He has brought them to faith, His Word will be at work in their hearts, enabling them to see sins that they were formerly blind to, teaching them to shun those sins instead of making excuses for them, and assuring them of forgiveness in Christ, while bringing them to a greater knowledge of God and a better understanding of the Gospel. And, the authority of His Word plays a part in that. As it is written, **"We continually give thanks to God, because, when you received the Word of God that you heard from us, you did not receive it as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectively works in you who believe."** (1Thessalonians 2:13).

The words, **"Do not be conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,"** and the words, **"Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ,"** tell us that our minds and our thinking – our entire worldview – should be **conformed** to the Word of God (Romans 12:2, 2Corinthians 10:5). At the same time, the words, **"Making the Word of God of no effect through your tradition,"** warn us of the danger of making excuses for sin instead of repenting and turning away from sin (Mark 7:14). And, the words, **"Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with words of worldly wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be made of no effect,"** warn us that unbiblical thinking can undermine the work of the gospel (1Corinthians 1:17).

God's Word in the Life of the Church

Just as God's Word should be the highest authority in the life of the believer, it should be the highest authority in the church. All teaching should be in agreement with it, and anything that contradicts what it says should be rejected. As it is written, **"To the law and to the testimony: if they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them"** (Isaiah 8:20).

However, in order for God's Word to have its rightful place in the life of the church, and the preeminence that it deserves, **we must distinguish clearly between what God says and what men say.** When the prophet Jeremiah said, **"The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; and he who has my word, let him speak my word faithfully,"** he was speaking out against all who pass their own word, their own opinions, off as the Word of God (Jeremiah 23:28). When Jesus said, **"You completely invalidate the commandment of God, in order to keep your tradition,"** He was speaking out against all who rationalize sin, and make up excuses aimed at getting around what the Bible says (Mark 7:9). Yet, the practice of teaching opinion as doctrine while explaining away any passages of Scripture that contradict that opinion is widespread in American Churches. You ask where. Where does the Bible say that Christ will raise up believers before the **"last day"**? I tell you that it is not in the Bible! In fact Christ said the opposite. Christ said, **"Every one who looks to the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up on the last day"** (John 6:40). Yet, if you point out that verse to those teach the opposite they will explain it away, just as the Pharisees that Christ was speaking to in Mark 7:9 explained away God's Word. Many also teach a false gospel, telling people that they can live in sin and still be saved. However, the Bible says, **"Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh, for the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and they are opposed to each other: so that you cannot do the things that you would"** (Galatians 5:16-17). Or, as John put it, **"Whoever has been born of God does not continue in sin; for His seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God"** (1John 3:9).

The point I am making is that we can know for certain exactly what the Bible says, or does not say. However, you will never be able to know what the Bible says unless you can tell the difference between what the words actually say, and the ideas you read into them. And, you will never be able to know what the Bible says until you are willing to reject any interpretations that contradict what the words say. There is no place for self-deception! As it is written, **"Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no self-deception"** (Psalm 32:2).

God's Word is Our Standard

The words, **"If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,"** tell us that Scripture is the standard that everything taught in the church should agree with (Isaiah 8:20). Nothing

taught in our churches should ever contradict what the Bible says. And, when the Apostle Paul says, **“Having gifts that differ according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, prophesy according to the standard of faith,”** he is emphasizing the fact that what is taught as God’s Word (prophecy) should agree with what the Bible says about faith in Christ (Romans 12:6). As it is written, **“The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy”** (Revelation 19:10). [See John 5:39, Acts 10:43.]

When we reject and condemn a doctrine that contradicts what the Bible says, we are using Scripture as a judge. The words, **“Those who know God accept what we [the apostles and prophets] say, those who are not of God will not accept what we say,”** condemn those who refuse to submit to God’s judgment (1John 4:6). As do the words, **“If anyone teaches otherwise, and will not agree with sound teaching, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine that is in accord with godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing,”** (1Timothy 6:3-4).

Beware of False Prophets

With the words, **“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves,”** Christ authorizes every believer to judge what is being taught, and to reject those who contradict what the Bible says (Matthew 7:15). The Apostle Paul was not offended when the Jews at Berea, **“Searched the scriptures daily, to see whether”** the things that he was teaching were so. On the contrary, he commended them (Acts 17:11). And, he urged the believers at Corinth to judge what he was teaching, saying, **“I speak as to wise men, judge for yourselves what I say”** (1Corinthians 10:15). At the same time, it is important to know, that believers are to judge what is taught, by what the Bible plainly says not by their own opinions or private interpretations. Those who presume to pit their own opinions against the Word of God are guilty of being, **“Prophets of the deceit of their own heart”** (Jeremiah 23:26). As it is written, **“If any man speaks, let him speak according to God’s Word”** (1Peter 4:11).

Translations

Because translations are not inspired by God, the original Hebrew and Greek text of the Bible is the authority by which all translations must be judged. However, a good translation of the original text is just as much the word of God as the original text. Therefore, while a pastor should know what the Hebrew or Greek text says, he should never use that knowledge in a

way that undermines the confidence the people have in their translation, or gives them the impression that the Bible is a dark book that can only be understood by those who understand Hebrew and Greek. In the words of John Theodore Mueller, “The gap between the original text and its translations must not be widened unduly, so as to create doubts regarding their authority; for the language of Scripture is in most instances so direct and simple that any translator who performs his work conscientiously is compelled by the clear and direct language of Scripture to reproduce the sense of the original.” (“*Christian Dogmatics*”, page 132)

The Canon of Scripture

There are at present a number of publications and false documentaries spreading the lie that certain books have been removed from the New Testament. The truth is, those books were never accepted by the Christian church, and were never a part of the New Testament. Contrary to what these people claim, the four Gospels, and the Epistles of Paul have been universally accepted by the Christian church from the very beginning. The Gospels of Matthew and John were written by Apostles. The Gospel of Mark was written under the supervision of Peter. And, the Gospel of Luke and book of Acts were fully approved by Paul. There were a few people in the early centuries who questioned Hebrews (because the author is not named), the second and third epistles of John (because they seem like private letters), James and Jude (because even though they were brothers of Christ they were not prophets), and the book of Revelation (because of its strangeness). Nevertheless, those books were all widely accepted from the beginning. Let me also add that the books included in the New Testament did not become Scripture because of a decision made by the Church of Rome, but God compelled Rome to accept the books He had inspired.

B. THE DIVINE POWER OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

Because the Bible is the inspired Word of God it has power, the power of God, behind it. And, God works through it to accomplish His will. As it is written, “**I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God to salvation to every one who believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.**” (Romans 1:16). And, again, “**So will the word that goes out of my mouth be: it will not return to me empty, but it will accomplish what I want, and it will achieve what I sent it to do**” (Isaiah 55:11).

The words, “**He has given you life, who were dead in trespasses and sins,**” tell us that it is God who gives us life. (Ephesians 2:1). Because we are by nature “**dead in trespasses and sins,**” we can do nothing to make ourselves alive. That is why the Bible says, “**No one can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost,**” (1Corinthians 12:3). That is why the Bible says, “**Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD**” (Deuteronomy 8:3). And, that is why the Bible says, “**Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God**” (Romans 10:17).

From man’s point of view it sometimes does look like we are making a decision to believe. However, the words, “**No man can come to me, unless the Father who has sent me draws him,**” tell us that apart from the work of God no one ever could or would make the right decision (John 6:44). In fact, without God’s help Satan would quickly fill us with doubt, and destroy our faith. Therefore, just as God works through His Word to bring us to faith, He works through His Word to strengthen and preserve our faith. That is what Paul was talking about when He said, “**I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase**” (1Corinthians 3:6). The words, “**The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God,**” tell us that our assurance comes from the witness of the Holy Spirit in our heart (Romans 8:16). The words, “**Toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power,**” tell us that it is the power of God that brings us to faith, and the power of God that keeps us in faith (Ephesians 1:19). And, the words, “**Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God,**” tell us that God works through His Word to bring us to faith, and to keep us in faith (Romans 10:17).

Sometimes those whom God brings to faith in Christ feel an inner joy or excitement that they refer to as “a salvation experience”. However, because not all Christians have such an experience we should never equate an experience with salvation. **We are saved by faith in Christ, not experience.** The emphasis has to be on faith in Christ, not what we feel. Whenever churches loose sight of that fact, they not only cause Christians who have not had an experience to doubt their salvation, they also lead the unsaved to seek an experience instead of pointing them to Christ. And, when that happens there is a danger that people who do not trust in Christ will convince themselves they have had a salvation experience, when they have not.

Any valid experience of joy or excitement resulting from the Holy Spirit’s assurance of forgiveness in Christ should be regarded as a fruit of

faith, rather than faith itself. Many Christians, especially those who have grown up in the faith, go through life without having such an experience. However, they know they are saved because they are trusting in what Christ did, not what they do, to get them into heaven. In contrast, it is often those who had a hard time understanding the way of salvation, those who have been burdened with guilt, or those who have been trying to please God with works that experience joy when they finally understand that salvation depends on what Christ did, not what we do. What's more, a genuine "salvation experience" is far different from the carnal excitement sought after by the whoop and holler crowd. The excitement sometimes associated with faith in Christ might be described as the happiness of a joyful reunion, the relief of having a great burden lifted from the mind, and the fascination of something that you are eager to learn more about all rolled into one. Martin Luther described that experience in these words. "Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning. (From the book, "*HERE I STAND*," by Roland H. Bainton, page 49.)

The words, "**Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, that lives and abides for ever,**" tell us that we receive the new birth through the "Word of God" (1Peter 1:23). And, the words, "**Nor do I pray for them alone, but also for those who will believe on me through their word,**" tell us that we are brought to faith through the Word (John 17:20). However, the words, "**Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with words of worldly wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be made of no effect,**" tell us that the words of Scripture do not effect a change in the heart in a natural way, through elegance or appealing to reason, but in a supernatural way, "**That your faith should not rest in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God**" (1Corinthians 1:17 and 2:5).

The words, "**What is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power,**" tell us that the Word of God does not just tell us how to be saved, but actually converts us as the power of God works through it to bring us to faith in Christ (Ephesians 1:19). That is why the Bible calls the gospel, "**The power of God to salvation to every one who believes**" (Romans 1:16). Moreover, just as we are saved by the power of God, we are kept by the power of God. As it is written, "**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus**

Christ, who in His great mercy has caused us to be born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is incorruptible, and undefiled, and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation which is waiting to be revealed at the end of time” (1Peter 1:3-5).

Nevertheless, the words, **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets, and stone those who are sent to you, how often I longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not,”** tell us that the Word of God can be resisted (Matthew 23:37). As it is written, **“You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do you”** (Acts 7:51). And, again, **“We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks, But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God”** (1Corinthians 1:23-24).

C. THE DIVINE PURPOSE OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

God tells us in Scripture why He caused the Bible to be written, the purpose He intends for it to serve, and what our response to it should be. In short, it was written to testify of Christ (Jn.5:39), the purpose it serves is not only to testify of Christ but bring us to faith through that testimony (Jn.20:31), and our response to the law should be to humble ourselves before God and repent (1Jn.1:9), while our response to the gospel should be to believe God’s promise of forgiveness in Christ (Mk.1:15), and to believe that forgiveness cleanses us of all sin making us righteous in the sight of God (Rom.3:28). In the paragraphs that follow we will look at the Bible passages just cited, plus several others.

The words, **“This is a trustworthy statement, worthy of complete acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,”** tell us that Christ came into the world to save us (1Timothy 1:15). At the same time, the words, **“The Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many,”** tell us that Christ died to provide that salvation (Matthew 20:28). And, the words, **“I want to remind you of the gospel... upon which your faith rests... how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures,”** tell us that our faith

rests upon the testimony of God's Word ["the gospel"], and that Christ died and rose again in fulfillment of that Word (1Corinthians 15:1-4). [See Mark 10:45 and 1Tim. 2:6.]

The words, **"Search the scriptures; for in them you think that you have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me,"** and the words, **"These are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name,"** tell us that the Bible was written to testify of Christ, so that we might have eternal life through faith in Him (John 5:39 and 20:31).

The words, **"All the prophets testify of Him, that through His name whoever believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins,"** tell us that "all of the prophets" testify of Christ (Acts 10:43). The words, **"Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself,"** tell us that Jesus taught His disciples to look for that testimony in Scripture (Luke 24:27). And, the words, **"I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe in the name of the Son of God,"** tell us that Scripture was written so that we could "know" that we have eternal life in Him (1John 5:13).

How the Purpose of Scripture Applies to Its Interpretation

When Christ said, **"These are the words that I spoke to you, when I was still with you, that everything must be fulfilled, that was written in the law of Moses, in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me,"** the words, "in the law of Moses, in the prophets, and in the psalms" were a reference to the three parts of the Hebrew Scriptures (Luke 24:44). Therefore, those words of Christ testify to the fact that He regarded the entire Hebrew Old Testament as the Word of God. And, He was the one who would know! Moreover, because Scripture was written to testify of Christ, we should interpret everything that the Bible says in the light of what it says about Him. In theology that is known as a Christological (Christ centered) approach to Bible interpretation. In his epistles, the Apostle Paul gives us several examples of Christological interpretation as he interprets the Old Testament in the light of the Gospel. And, that approach to interpretation fits together perfectly with what I have already said about the theological unity of Scripture.

D. THE DIVINE SUFFICIENCY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

Because the Bible was, **“Written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life through His name,”** and because **“All the prophets testify of Him, that through His name whoever believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins,”** We know that God designed the Bible to include every thought, every idea, every doctrine that we need to know in order to be saved (John 20:31, Acts 10:43).

The words, **“From infancy you have known the holy scriptures, that are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus,”** and the words, **“Nor do I pray for them alone, but also for those who will believe on me through their word,”** tell us that what the Bible says is **sufficient** to bring us to salvation through faith in Christ (2Timothy 3:15, John 17:20). Therefore, there is no need to add to it, or supplement what it says. In fact, because it is sufficient, all attempts to change it, improve upon it, or supplement what it says will only hinder the work of salvation. That is why the Bible says, **“I testify to every man who hears the words of the prophecy of this book, If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book. And if anyone takes away from the words of this book of prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life”** (Revelation 22:18-19).

The words, **“Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be damned,”** tell us that the gospel is sufficient to bring men to faith in Christ (Mark 16:15-16). While, the words, **“All scripture is inspired by God... That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly equipped for every good work,”** tell us that the Bible contains everything necessary for our spiritual growth (2Timothy 3:16-17).

The words, **“We are telling you what we have seen and heard, so that you may have fellowship with us, and the fellowship we have is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And what we write to you is written, that your joy might be complete,”** tell us that the testimony of Scripture is sufficient to bring us into fellowship with God (1John 1:3-4). While the words, **“Teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you,”** with the words, **“Do not add to His words, lest He reprove you,”** tell us that the Bible contains everything necessary to teach

new believers “to observe everything” Christ has commanded (Matthew 28:20, Proverbs 30:6).

However, even though the Bible contains everything necessary for our salvation, the words, **“For what we now see is like a dim reflection on a glass; but then we will see face to face: now I know in part; but then I will know even as I am known,”** // **“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out,”** tell us that there is much that we do not know, and cannot know this side of heaven (1Corinthians 13:12, Romans 11:33). Furthermore, just as the Bible does not, and cannot, reveal all spiritual knowledge; it does not, and cannot, contain all earthly knowledge. And, the words, **“No truth of scripture comes from any private explanation,”** warn us not to explain Scripture in a way intended to make it support ideas that are not already taught in the clear statements of Scripture (2Peter 1:20).

E. THE DIVINE CLARITY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

God’s Word is to be believed not debated, faithfully taught not twisted to make it agree with the opinions of men. Because the Bible was written so, **“That you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe in the name of the Son of God,”** the meaning God intends for you to get from His words is nothing other than what those words plainly say (1John 5:13). Or, as the Apostle Paul put it, **“We have not written anything to you, other than what you read”** (2Corinthians 1:13). It is true that God’s Law needs to be applied, and men may disagree on how it is to be applied. It is also true that there are many things that we do not understand. However, every doctrine necessary to our salvation is so clearly and explicitly stated in Scripture that it needs no interpretation. For that reason, the only interpretation you need when reading Scripture is the same interpretation you are putting on my words as you read this, the plain grammatical meaning of the words. In other words, **I am not writing “anything to you, other than what you read”**.

Having said that let me make it clear that I am not denying that there are passages that are hard for us to understand. **The clarity of Scripture does not lie in our ability to fully understand what is said, but in the fact that the meaning God intends for you to get from His words is not hidden or mysterious, but is nothing “other than what you read”** (2Cor. 1:13). In other words, the words of Scripture mean just what they say. For

example: If an article you were reading contained this statement, “A keratolytic drug used in the treatment of skin disorders,” you might not understand that statement. But that would not mean that the author had some hidden meaning. On the contrary, the words mean exactly what they say, and they are explained by what the article says elsewhere. And, it is the same way with Scripture. If we encounter a passage that is hard to understand, instead of professing ourselves to be wise by making up an explanation, we should humbly admit our ignorance and allow the passages that are so clear that they need no explanation to cast light on the unclear passage. And, we do that by interpreting the unclear passages to teach the same doctrine that is taught in the clear passages of Scripture.

The words of the psalmist, **“Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path,”** // **“The entrance of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple,”** reveal the clarity of Scripture, for a dark book can never be a source of light or understanding (Psalm 119:105, 130). The words, **“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple,”** tell us that the Bible is clear enough to make “wise the simple” (Psalm 19:7). While the words, **“And we have a more sure word of prophecy; to which you do well to pay attention, as to a light that shines in a dark place,”** speak of Scripture as a light (2Peter 1:19). And, the words, **“Therefore seeing that we have such hope, we speak very clearly,”** tell us that the words of Scripture have no hidden meanings (2Corinthians 3:12).

Regarding 2Corinthians 3:12 let me add that the KJV translates the phrase containing the Greek word “parrhesia” as, “Great plainness of speech,” and translates that word as “plainly” in, John 10:24, John 11:14, John 16:25, and John 16:29. While Lenski translates 2Cor. 3:12 as “Having, therefore, such hope, we continue using full openness of speech”. Lenski explains that translation by telling us that the phrase, “full openness of speech,” “Means speaking with full openness, withholding nothing, without reservation of any kind” [i.e. nothing hidden] (Lenski’s commentary on First and Second Corinthians, page 935.)

The words, **“These were of better character than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so,”** tell us that the Bible’s testimony of Christ is so clear that the Jews at Berea had no difficulty finding it in Scripture (Acts 17:11). And, the words, **“From infancy you have known the holy scriptures, that are able to make you**

wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus,” not only tell us that the words of Scripture are plain enough for a child to understand, but that they are also sufficiently clear to make one, **“wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus”** (2Timothy 3:15).

The words, **“Search the scriptures; for in them you think that you have eternal life: and they are they that testify of me,”** would not make any sense if what the Bible says was just a matter of opinion (John 5:39). The same holds true for the words, **“Abraham said to him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them”** (Luke 16:29). And, for the words, **“Therefore, brethren, stand firm, and hold fast to the instructions that you were taught, either by what we said, or our letter”** (2Thessalonians 2:15).

Christ’s words, **“If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free,”** presuppose the clarity of scripture, for it is only because the words of Scripture are clear that those who continue in them can “know the truth” (John 8:31-32). As do the words, **“If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,”** for it is only because the words of Scripture are clear that we can tell if someone is speaking “according to” them or not (Isaiah 8:20).

Those Who Reject the Clarity of Scripture

Throughout history there have been many who have been blind to the clarity of Scripture, many who rejected it outright, and many who have attacked it. The words, **“The minds of those who do not believe have been blinded by the god of this world,”** tell us that those who do not believe have been blinded (2Corinthians 4:4). The words, **“Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it through faith, but through the works of the law,”** tell us why the Jews were blinded (Romans 9:31-32). They were blinded because they were so intent on making themselves righteous, that they were not willing to admit their sin and look to Christ for forgiveness. And, many today are blinded by their fixation on works righteousness.

However, a fixation on works is only part of the reason for their blindness. The words, **“Those who know God accept what we say; those who are not of God will not accept what we say. That is how we can distinguish the spirit of truth from the spirit of error,”** tell us that they are also blinded by the fact that the Holy Spirit is not in their hearts, and

because they are unwilling to accept anything in the Bible that condemns them or disagrees with their opinions (1John 4:6).

In the world today, much opposition to the clarity of Scripture comes from those who are unwilling to accept what the Bible says about Creation and the age of the earth. The Bible is perfectly clear, but they deny its clarity because they no longer believe what it says, but are unwilling to admit it.

For example: The words, **“In six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything that is in them, and rested on the seventh day: for that reason the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and made it holy,”** are perfectly clear (Exodus 20:11). Anyone, having average intelligence, can see that the days being spoken of are days of the week. That is made abundantly clear by the context. And, the only people who say, “Well we don’t know how long a day was,” are those who do not want to accept what the Bible says.

Because God knew that these people would create doubts about the length of the creation days, He plainly tells us that **“The evening and the morning were the first day,”** while saying the same for each of the following creation days (Genesis 1:5,8,13,19,23,31). And, if that is not enough, by the words, **“God separated the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and called the darkness Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day,”** God defines evening and morning as a period of darkness and light (Genesis 1:4-5). My point is that the Bible is perfectly clear. The darkness is in the heart of man, which is, **“Deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,”** not in Scripture (Jeremiah 17:9).

“Holy Scripture never states mere ‘general principles’ from which the Christian theologian or the Christian Church must ‘develop’ the doctrines; for it is not a book of ‘general principles’ but of doctrines. In order that the theologian may be kept from teaching false doctrine, he must constantly bear in mind that he is to teach nothing but what Scripture itself teaches in clear words... The Christian exegete must scrupulously refrain from foisting upon its sacred text his own subjective views” (John Theodore Mueller, *“Christian Dogmatics”*, pages 138-139.)

How the Clarity of Scripture Applies to Its Interpretation

The Word of God is clear because God loves us and is, **“Not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”** (2Peter

3:9). However, Satan wants just the opposite. Because Satan hates us he wants people to ignore what the words of Scripture actually say while reading their own ideas into the text. And, one of the ways he does that is by convincing them that the doctrine of the Trinity is not found in Scripture. So I will use the doctrine of the Trinity to illustrate how the clarity of Scripture applies to Bible interpretation.

While it is true that the word, “Trinity” is not found in Scripture, that word is simply the name we ascribe to a body of doctrinal truths that are each clearly and explicitly stated in Scripture. For example:

1- The words, “**Don’t we all have one father? Hasn’t one God created us,**” give us the doctrine that **the Father is God** (Malachi 2:10)

2- The words, “**We are in the one who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God, and eternal life,**” give us the doctrine that **the Son is God** (1John 5:20).

3- The words, “**Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Ghost... you have not lied to men, but to God,**” give us the doctrine that **the Holy Ghost is God** (Acts 5:3-4).

4- The words, “**There is one God; and there is none other but He,**” give us the doctrine that **there is only one God** (Mark 12:32).

In stating those four doctrines I in no way want to imply that the passages I quoted are the only passages of Scripture that teach those doctrines. Nor do I wish to imply that those four doctrines are all there is to the doctrine of the Trinity. There is far more. However, **those four doctrines constitute the heart and core of the doctrine of the Trinity.** And, the point I want to make is that **each of them is clearly and explicitly stated in Scripture.**

I also want to call attention to the fact that those doctrinal truths are not all found in one place, but are scattered through Scripture “**here a little and there a little**”. For it is written, “**To whom can he teach knowledge? and who will he enable to understand doctrine?... for truth must be upon truth, truth upon truth; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little,**” (Isaiah 28:9-10).

One cult that denies the doctrine of the Trinity claims that the Holy Spirit is just God’s “active force”. Of course, that is just something they made up. However, we reject it because the words, “**He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit,**” tell us that the Spirit has a mind (Romans 8:27). The words, “**The Spirit himself makes intercession for us,**” tells us that the Spirit intercedes for us (Romans 8:26). The words, “**The Spirit specifically says, that in the future some will depart from the**

faith,” tell us that the Spirit speaks (1Timothy 4:1). The words, **“The Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things,”** tell us that the Spirit teaches (John 14:26). The words, **“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God,”** tell us that the Holy Spirit can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30). And, the words, **“Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Ghost,”** tell us that the Holy Spirit can be lied to (Acts 5:4). Because having a mind, making intercession, speaking, teaching, and being grieved etc. are the characteristics of a personal being (not a force) we refer to the Holy Spirit as a person. And, since the same can be said about the Father and the Son, we refer to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three “Persons” rather than three Gods. That terminology is used in order to avoid contradicting the fact that there is only One God. So again, what God wants us to teach is plainly stated “line upon line” as the Bible teaches (Isaiah 28:9-10).

Because the doctrine that God wants us to believe and teach is clearly and explicitly stated in Scripture, everything else that the Bible says is there to support that doctrine, and nothing that is taught in the hard to understand passages of Scripture will contradict what is taught in the clear. For that reason, all of the hard to understand passages need to be interpreted to teach the same doctrine that is taught in the clear passages. And, those who interpret the hard to understand passages in a way that contradicts what is taught in the clear passages should not be listened to. As it is written, **“If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”** (Isaiah 8:20).

SCRIPTURE ALONE