

The Doctrine Of Scripture

2 Timothy 3:14-4:4

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In 2 Timothy 3:14-4:4, Paul says to Timothy, “But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of.” I think that's so apropos. You need to continue in the doctrines of the Bible, which we will be studying. Paul continues, “...knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” So the Scriptures bring salvation. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...”—here's our main text—“...and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God...”—and I like to add, “the woman of God”—“...may be complete...”—or “perfect” or “mature”—“...thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Because there were no breaks of chapters and verses in the original writing, the thought continues: “I charge you therefore...”—Paul is charging his young pastor, Timothy—“...before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing...”—when He returns—“...and His kingdom: preach the word!” That's our topic today, the Word of God. “Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine...”—which is healthy, life-giving doctrine—“...but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth...”—which is the same as the Holy Scriptures, the Word, the doctrine, the truth—“...and be turned aside to fables.”

Why should we do a series on Bible doctrine? In 2 Timothy 4:3-4, it says, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”

My heart is stirred by those words. That time has come when men “will not endure sound doctrine.” One of the reasons why I'm bringing doctrines to the pulpit in this series is because it's not what some people want. But I know you are a Bible-literate congregation and love the Word of God. I know your response is going to be the Word of God and “not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God.”

There are a lot of places where people want their ears tickled. They've turned away from the truth and they've been given unto fables. Nothing stirs my heart more than the need today for the Word of God to be preached and taught in the churches of America and around the world. So this series has been pressing my heart for many years. The time has come when men “will not endure sound doctrine,” so I want to bring “sound doctrine” to the pulpit.

In 1 Timothy 4:1, it says, “The Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.” The word “depart” is where we

get our word “apostasy” or “apostatize.” It means that they leave the orthodox doctrine or the faith that we believe, as Christians, and shall “be turned aside to fables.”

Titus 2:1 says, “Speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine.” Then you find, in verse 3 of our text, the words “sound doctrine.” The word “sound” before the word “doctrine” is a medical term. It means “health-giving, life-giving.” So when the Bible is taught soundly or truthfully, it brings life and health. It’s the life-giving, sound, Biblical teaching or doctrine.

In Jude 3 it also says, “Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” When you see the words “the faith”—not “faith,” which is subjective, individual belief—it means the body of truth that we hold to and believe that we should contend for. Jude is basically saying to put on boxing gloves. So I’m trying to contend “for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” This is something that is so very important and on my heart to do.

Every person has a source of authority. It can be tradition, intellect, emotion, your parents. We’re all molded and shaped in some way. Why do you believe what you believe? What is your source of authority? Is it because your pastor said so? Or because the government said so? For the Christian, it must be one source and one source only.

“It’s the B-i-b-l-e.

Yes, that’s the book for me.

I stand alone on the Word of God,

The B-i-b-l-e.”

I learned that song when I was a little boy. I haven’t always lived it or believed it, but it stirs my heart to this day.

The Bible is our source for everything we believe. How do we know there is a God? The Bible. How do we know that God loves us? The Bible. How do we know what marriage is? The Bible. How do we know what a man and a woman are? The Bible. God knows what they are, because He made them in His image and likeness. How do we know anything that is true? The Bible.

So our text tells us in verse 15 that it is “the Holy Scriptures.” Hebrews 4:12 says that it is “the word of God.” It is the Bible and the Bible alone that is our source of authority.

What do we believe about the Bible? We believe that the Scripture alone is the living, powerful Word of God, written, inspired, inerrant and infallible. Why is this belief about the Bible important? Let me give you three reasons.

Number one, we need authority in our lives. We have nothing to stand on as absolute authority if we don’t have a transcendent God. And the primary way God has revealed Himself and His

will to us is in the Bible. In creation and in our conscience, God has revealed Himself to us in a general sense. But in a very specific, objective way He has revealed Himself to us in His Word, the Bible. The Bible is the self-revelation of God, God's autobiography.

In our world today, we need an authority, a place that we can stand on. How do we know what is right? How do we know what is wrong? How do we know what is true? How do we know what is false? We must take a stand on the Word of God. We must think Biblically.

James Montgomery Boyce said, "It is because we believe that the true God has revealed Himself to us in Jesus and the Bible, which tells us about Him; that God has spoken in the Bible, and the Bible is authoritative, because God is the ultimate authority."

When God speaks, He is the final "court of appeals." God has more authority than the Supreme Court of the United States. And He is a much greater authority than the President of the United States. God is the authority. So when God speaks, we must listen and obey.

The second reason why we have to have a right view of Scripture is because we need, in our churches today, expository preaching. I believe the greatest need in the world today is for expository preaching and teaching. I'm convinced of that.

One of the great preachers of our century, Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones, said, "The number one reason for the decline in preaching is the loss of belief in the authority of the Scriptures." I agree. How a pastor views the Bible determines how he preaches and teaches the Bible. If you have a low view of Scripture, you have a low view of preaching, and your preaching is not expositional or Biblical. If you have a high view of Scripture, then you are bound by the Scriptures, as Paul said to Timothy to "Preach the word!" Nothing more and nothing less. I believe this is a charge to do expositional preaching.

Isn't it funny that some pastors think, What do I need to do to grow the church? Why do they do that? Jesus said, "I'll build the church." A preacher's job is to preach the Word—not your views, not your opinions, not your ideas. "Preach the word!" Don't preach any substitutes, any gimmicks, any programs. Just simply "Preach the word!" Preach the unadulterated Word of God, and that will grow the church. So we need expository preaching.

And, number three, we need healthy churches, which is a natural outgrowth of preaching the Word. A church cannot be healthy if it isn't holy. And a church cannot be holy without the Spirit of God working through the Word of God to transform the child of God into the image of the Son of God. How do Christians grow? God's Spirit using God's Word to transform them into the image of the Son of God.

There are five wrong views of the Bible. The first view is called "rationalism." It denies the possibility of any supernatural revelation. The human mind alone is the final authority. This is very popular today. There is no supernatural element to the Scriptures. But we, as Christians, reject this view.

The second wrong view is called “Romanism.” That’s an old term. It’s the view of the Roman Catholic Church. This is what divides, in its very foundational essence, Roman Catholicism from Protestantism: their view of Scripture. Everything flows out of that. In the Roman Catholic view, the Bible is the product of The Church, therefore The Church is the authority. In Roman Catholicism, the Bible is the Word of God, but it is not the only source of authority. They believe in papal authority, in the bishops and in tradition. These are believed to have equal authority along with the Scriptures. So the key is that they believe the Bible is not the final authority.

The third view that is wrong about the Bible is what’s called “mysticism.” This view is that experience is authoritative along with the Bible. This view is found in charismatic, Pentecostal churches, whose members I believe are brothers and sisters in Christ—I’m not opposed to them; in that sense, they are orthodox.

I grew up in that kind of environment, where experience trumped the objective truth of God’s Word. And things were going on in the church that if you asked the pastor, “Why is this happening? Where is it in the Bible?” he would say, “It’s not in the Bible, but the Spirit is moving.” Be careful when supposedly “the Spirit is moving” in a church, and you can’t see it clearly taught in the Bible. You should judge your experience by the Scriptures. You don’t judge the Scriptures by your experience. This is so very important.

Some people say, “Well, I know it’s not Biblical, but I know it’s true because I heard it” or “I saw it” or “I experienced it.” Even Peter said, after his experience on the mount of transfiguration, that experience is not as substantial as the Word of God, which is objective truth.

The fourth incorrect view of the Bible that we reject is called “neo-orthodoxy.” It was popularized by a Swiss theologian named Karl Barth, who died in 1968. He said, “The Bible is a fallible witness to the revelation of God in the word. The words of Scripture become the words of God to us as we encounter them.” It’s the idea that the Bible is not necessarily true, but when you read it, it becomes true for you personally as you encounter God in His Word. It’s a form of subjectivism, to you individually.

This view is very popular in many professing, evangelical churches today. It’s also known as “progressive Christianity.” It’s basically the old liberalism, and it’s a lie of the devil. It’s not progressive, not liberal and not orthodox.

The fifth false view of the Bible is the view the cults take. In Christian cults, the Bible and the writings of the particular cult leaders are of equal authority. An example of a cult that holds this view is the Church of the Latter Day Saints or the Mormons. They have the Book of Mormon, which trumps the Bible. They have the Pearl of Great Price, the Doctrine and Covenants and they have all the writings of their leaders, so the Bible is not the supreme authority in their writings. So if the Book of Mormon contradicts the Bible, then they reject the Bible for the Book of Mormon. The Bible is only as accurate as it is translated properly. They reject the authority of Scripture alone. So do Jehovah’s Witnesses, which are so common today in our world.

Let me give you the simple, correct, orthodox view of the Bible. The Bible alone is the ground of authority; it is the Word of God, given by inspiration, is inerrant and is authoritative. So the Bible alone is the Word of God, is God-breathed, is inspired by God, is inerrant or without error and is infallible. It is the ultimate authority.

Someone said, "To give the Bible its rightful place is to bring glory to God, health to the church and light to the world." We want to bring glory to God, we want to bring health to the church and we want to bring light to the world. This is why I'm committed to preaching and teaching the Bible. This is why we are a Bible-centered church: we want to glorify God, bring health to the church and light to the world.

There are three points I want to focus on concerning the Scriptures. They are, number one, their inspiration; number two, their inerrancy; and number three, their authority.

Number one, the Bible is inspired by God. He's the inspiration for Scripture. 2 Timothy 3:16 is perhaps the classic Scripture on inspiration. It says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God..."—then Paul goes on to say what it's good for—"...and is profitable for doctrine..."—or "for what is right"—"...for reproof..."—or "for what is wrong"—"...for correction..."—or "for how to get right"—"...for instruction in righteousness..."—or "for how to stay right"—"...that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" or "for equipping for service." Then verse 15 says the Scriptures bring salvation; in verse 16, they bring sanctification; and in verse 17, they equip us for service. So this shows us the sufficiency of Scripture.

It also shows us the clarity of Scripture, which is under attack today. Some people say it's not clear, you can't understand it, you can't be dogmatic about what it teaches, because it's not clear. I believe it's clear. God gave us a book, so don't you think He wants us to know what it says, what it means and how it applies to our lives? It's clear and sufficient and able to produce righteousness.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration." The word "inspiration" is a literal reference to "God breathed." The Bible is breathed by God. The Greek word literally means "breathed out," not "breathed in." It's talking about spirant breathing or God breathing out. The Bible is given by the very breath of God.

And God breathed out all Scripture, so it would include the New Testament as well as the Old Testament. It's amazing how much Old Testament—and that's what Paul was referring to when speaking to Timothy—is repeated in the New Testament. All through the New you have repeating of the Old. The apostles acknowledged that what they wrote in the New Testament was the Word of God, and it is classified as Scripture, as well.

Now there are four, false views of inspiration. Number one is "natural inspiration." When we say the Word of God is "inspired," we have to define that. Some people use the same vocabulary but a different dictionary. That's wrong. They use words that sound orthodox, but they give

them a different meaning. And that is happening in our culture today. People are changing the meaning of words; same words with different meanings.

What people holding this view say is that the writers of the Bible were only highly gifted and inspired individuals. I don't think so. The Bible said about these writers that "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise." They say that Peter, James, John and Matthew and all the writers of the Bible were writing the Scriptures simply by "natural inspiration." No.

The second false view of inspiration is what's called "dictation or mechanical inspiration." That means that the writers of Scripture were passive instruments and that God actually dictated it to them. Yes, God told Moses exactly what to write and he wrote it. But God also wrote by His own hand, like the Decalogue or Ten Commandments. And the instructions for the building of the tabernacle were given directly by God. But when the Bible was written by men, God wasn't dictating it to them; God superintended it on human authors.

It also wasn't "mechanical inspiration." When Paul was in jail in Rome, he wasn't just a passive instrument in writing his epistles. Paul didn't see his hand moving by itself. It wasn't God using Paul mechanically in writing the epistles. I wasn't "spirit writing."

The third false view of inspiration is "fallible inspiration," which is the neo-orthodox view or the progressive view. That view holds that it was given by inspiration of God, but there are mistakes or errors in it, that it's not infallible.

The fourth false view of inspiration is the "conceptual inspiration," which means that the Bible just contains large concepts about God, about salvation and about Christ. You don't need to get historical, you don't need to look at the grammar because it's not accurate and the geography's not accurate. It's really not historical writing. And it not a scientific book; they say the Bible is not scientific. But the Bible is the Word of God, and God knows science better than anyone else. The Bible is factual and historical truth.

And how do you convey concept without using words? If your words are wrong, how do you convey true concepts? So their "conceptual inspiration" isn't correct. We need to be specific in words to convey correct concepts, which the Bible is.

The correct, orthodox view of inspiration is called "verbal plenary inspiration." "Verbal" means that the very words of the Scriptures are inspired by God, and "plenary" means "all of them."

This is why when you study the Bible, when I preach and teach the Bible, we look at words and grammar. They're important. They're all given by inspiration of God. So we look at the very words—verbal—and all of them are given by inspiration of God.

Jesus believed this in Matthew 5:18 when He said, "One jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled." A jot and tittle in the Hebrew was like a little curl on the end of a letter. It might be like our exclamation point. So it would be like saying that not one period or

exclamation point is going to pass until “all is fulfilled.” Jesus taught that the law of God could not change.

The definition of “inspiration” is “the superintendence of God of the human authors so that using their own, individual personalities...”—that’s the key—“...they composed and recorded without error...”—it’s “inerrant”—“...His revelation to man in the words of the original autograph.”

There are several features I want to mention about this definition of inspiration. Number one, God superintended but He did not dictate the material. Number two, He used human authors in their own, individual styles. Number three, the product was in the original manuscripts without error. The reason all this is important is because God carried them along by the Holy Spirit. So when God breathed out His Spirit, He used their styles, their personalities and their own historical experiences and situations. You can read Paul’s letters and know they are Pauline. You can read the writings of John and know they are Johannine. You can see that in the text. So God superintended the words, so that the very words they wrote were the words of God.

2 Peter 1:16-21 is the second, classic passage on the subject of inspiration, or what it means that God inspired the Word. It says, “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables” or “myths.” So our belief in what we are following is not myths. “...when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.”

Here Peter is referring to the mount of transfiguration. Peter, James and John went up on a high mountain where Jesus was transfigured before them. This was a marvelous experience. What they saw was Christ’s deity shining through His humanity. They saw a preview of the Second Coming. And they heard the voice of God the Father saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” That was awesome.

Continuing with verse 19, “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed...”—this is talking about the Scriptures, the Bible, the Word of God—“...which you do well to heed...”—that is, “the Scriptures”—“...as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first...”—he’s going to explain why we should be committed more to the objective truth of God’s Word than to the subjective experience they had on the mountain—“... that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation.”

This means that the writers of Scripture weren’t writing their own ideas. But that doesn’t mean that you can’t interpret it yourself. God gives us clarity of the Word; we can interpret it because we have the Holy Spirit to help us. You don’t even need a priest or a pastor to interpret it for you; it’s clear. God said what He meant and meant what He said. So when it says no “private interpretation,” it means they weren’t writing their own ideas; it didn’t originate with them.

And how do we know that? Verse 21 says, “For prophecy never came by the will of man...”—

there it is explained—“...but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” So the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Godhead, is as equally the author of Scripture as are God the Father and God the Son.

Basically what Peter is saying is that the authors of Scripture didn't write their own ideas, verse 20, but God carried them along. The words “moved by” were used of wind filling the sails of a sailboat and carrying it over the water. When the wind fills the sails, you feel a rush of power. It's awesome. Being carried over the water is a very cool feeling.

That's the idea: these writers of Scripture or human authors were carried along by the Holy Spirit. So I like to use the word “superintended.” God didn't dictate the words, and the words weren't mechanically written. God oversaw the writers as He carried them along; He breathed out the Word as He carried the authors along.

I like the idea that the Bible, the written Word of God—Jesus is the living Word of God—like Christ, has two natures. The Bible is the Word of God, but it is also the word of men. So you study the Bible as you would any other book—its geography, its grammar, its structure, its words, its history, its background—because it's written by men. It was born out of historical situations. But the Bible, as the Word of God, you study as you would no other book—on your knees praying for illumination, which results in transformation. “God, give me eyes and open my heart.”

When I read the newspaper, I don't get on my knees praying that God would help me understand it. I just read it and get angry.

So when you study the Bible, you study it like any other book, because it's the word of men. And when you study the Bible, you also study it like no other book, because it's the Word of God. We err in this way so often; we either just study it like it's like any other book, or we study it like it's just the mystical word of God and we can get revelation by ourselves. No. We use our minds, but we also rely on the Holy Spirit as we study and interpret the Word of God.

Like the Son of God, the Word of God has two natures; it's both human and divine. A lot of people say, “Well, the Bible was written by men.” Yes, that's true. So what? They were carried along by the Holy Spirit in their writing. “Well, the Bible was just written by men; it's their own ideas.” No; it's God's own breath that wrote the Word. God breathed out the Word of God to men. So the inspiration of Scripture is a very important, doctrinal truth.

2 Peter 1:19 says that it's the sure Word and the shining Word or “a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” In Psalm 19:7, it says, “The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.” Psalm 119:105 says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” This is one of my favorite verses. So it's a light that shines in a dark place. It's the sure Word and the shining Word.

It's also the Spirit-given Word, 2 Peter 1: 20-21. “...knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy

men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” It’s not of private interpretation, private understanding or private origination. Instead its writers were moved by the Holy Spirit.

So the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

The second point about the Scriptures is that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God. I believe in the inerrancy of Scripture. 2 Timothy 4:3-4 says, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.” Notice that the Word of God is good for sound doctrine, 2 Timothy 3:16. But men “will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”

A lot of times pastors give the people what they want to hear. That can be very dangerous. When a congregation has “itching ears,” the pastor shouldn’t scratch them.

My commitment is to be faithful to God. I never preach or teach the Word of God because I think that it will grow this church. I preach and teach the Bible because I think it’s God’s Word, and I’m going to have to answer to God for how faithful I was to dispense it to the people. When I get to heaven, you’re not going to be looking at me and saying, “Why didn’t you preach better sermons?” I will be looking in the face of Jesus, and He could say, “Why didn’t you preach My Word? Why didn’t you faithfully teach the Word of God?”

This is what Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:1-2. “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word!” “Preach” is the Hebrew word “kerusso,” which means “to herald” or “to proclaim”; nothing more and nothing less. Don’t add to it and don’t take away from it. Proclaim the Word of God, because this is the truth of God’s Word.

So verse 4 says that those who are turning away err and turn “away from the truth, and are “turned aside to fables.” This is happening in our world today. But the Bible is breathed out by God, 2 Timothy 3:16. Since God cannot err, therefore the Bible is inerrant, holy, true and trustworthy.

If you think you find a mistake in the Bible, think again. Either you misinterpreted it or you mistranslated it or you’re twisting it or you’re doing something wrong. The problem’s not with the Bible; it’s with us. So there are no errors or mistakes. God never said, “Oops; give Me an eraser.” God is the God of truth. He is omniscient, omnipotent and able to guard His Word. So God’s Word is holy, inerrant and infallible.

2 Timothy 3:16 says, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine...”—or “for what is right”—“...for reproof...”—or “for what is wrong”—“...for correction...”—or “for how to get right”—“...for instruction in righteousness” or “for how to stay right.”

Psalms 19:7-11 is a third, very clear area that refers to the Bible. It says, “The law of the

Lord..."—which is a title for Scripture—"...is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord..."—another title for the Bible—"...is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord..."—another title for Scripture—"...are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord..."—another title for the Bible—"...is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord..."—that's a reference to the Scriptures—"...is clean, enduring forever..."—or "is eternal"—"...the judgments of the Lord..."—another title for Scripture—"...are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them..."—that is, "by the Scriptures"—"...Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward."

All of this is a description of God's revelation under inspiration, under inerrancy of the Scriptures, the Word of God. The Bible is "the law of the Lord, the testimony of the Lord, the statutes of the Lord, the commandment of the Lord, the fear of the Lord, the judgments of the Lord." The Bible is "perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, true, righteous altogether." How marvelous that is. The Bible converts the soul, makes wise the simple, rejoices the heart, enlightens the eyes and endures forever. It's "more to be desired...than much fine gold." That's how valuable the Bible is.

So the Bible is God-breathed; God cannot err, therefore the Bible is inerrant and wholly true; the Scriptures are "perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, true and righteous altogether."

There are several dangers in denying inerrancy or in denying that the Bible is without error. First, if God could lie, then you could justify that we could lie also. Why do we have so much lying going on in our culture today? It's because we no longer believe that the Bible is the Word of God. He said, "Thou shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." It's one of the Ten Commandments. We know that lying is wrong, because God says so in His Word. When you get rid of God and His Word, "every man is a liar." The Bible says, "Let God be true but every man a liar." It naturally follows that rejection of God and His Word produces a degeneration of our culture. Without the Bible, we're lost—as individuals, as a married couple, as a family, as a church, as a nation. Everything is lost. We need God's Word.

Secondly, if the Bible is not inerrant, can I trust anything God says?

And thirdly, if some of the Scripture is true and some not true, who is to judge what is true and what is false? The preacher may say, "There was no Jonah. He didn't really get swallowed by a whale. That's just poetic language. There really was no Noah, who built a big boat and put animals on that boat. It really didn't happen. God didn't part the Red Sea, so the children of Israel didn't walk through it on dry ground. Moses never saw a burning bush." Who becomes the authority now? The preacher. He would be the one who tells you what is true and what is false.

If we think that the Bible has errors, that the Bible has mistakes, that the Bible is not wholly true, then we start neglecting or rejecting the areas of the Bible that convict us of our sin, and we don't read it anymore. Isn't that convenient? When we say, "Well, Jesus really didn't say that,"

isn't that convenient? When the Bible describes sexual immorality, and the preacher says that the Bible is not inerrant, you can say, "Well then, my behavior is fine. I can justify the way I want to live." At that point, we become the authorities, not the Bible. Instead of submitting to God's authority in His unchanging Word, we become our own authority.

This is why our culture is so changing today. And I place the blame and the responsibility on the church, not on the culture. I trace the blame to the pulpits of America. When our churches become liberal and reject the inerrancy and infallibility of God's Word, our culture goes down fast. May God have mercy on our nation! This is so very important.

God cannot err; the Bible is the Word of God, therefore the Bible cannot err.

Someone said, "To hear the Bible is to hear God. To obey the Bible is to obey God. To disobey the Bible is to rebel against God."

I like the story of Dr. Billy Graham, the great American evangelist we all so love. Early in his preaching ministry, he was challenged as to whether the Bible was the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word. At Forest Home in Southern California, he went out into the woods one night and laid his Bible on a stump and prayed. He said, "God, I don't always understand everything in this book, but I'm going to believe that this Bible is the Word of God—inerrant, inspired and infallible. And I'm going to preach it as the true Word of God. I'm going to take my stand on Scripture." And the rest, as they say, is history.

If Dr. Graham had not taken that stand on the inerrant, infallible, authoritative Word of God, there would be no Billy Graham Ministry. God mightily used that farm boy. He was a humble man who believed that the Bible is the inerrant, infallible, inspired Word of God. And throughout history some of the greatest, social reformations have taken place because Christians took a stand on the Scriptures as the inerrant, infallible, true Word of God.

The third point I want to make about Scripture is that it is authoritative. The Bible is the Word of God, the Bible is inerrant and the Bible is the ultimate authority. The Bible is the final "court of appeals." And the Bible is clear and all-sufficient. When you have a clear "Thus saith the Lord," the argument is over. This is the Word of the Lord and we must obey it. The Bible says about itself, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," all Scripture is inerrant, true and trustworthy and it is the supreme authority.

John R.W. Stott said, "The overriding reason for accepting the divine inspiration and authority of Scripture is the plain loyalty to Jesus." In other words, if you are loyal to Jesus Christ, you will believe what He believed about the Bible. How did Jesus view Scripture? What was His view of the Bible? Since He was the incarnate Son of God, since He was God in the flesh, we should ask how He related to the Bible, how He viewed the Bible and what He believed about the Bible?

Number one, Jesus affirmed the Bible's divine authority. In Matthew 4, when Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness, how did He answer the devil? He answered with "the

sword of the Spirit," the Word of God. He said, "It is written." After each temptation, Jesus said, "It is written." Jesus defeated the devil by the authority of God's Word. He used the Scriptures. And in John 10:35, Jesus said, "The Scripture cannot be broken." So the Bible is authoritative.

Number two, Jesus affirmed the Bible's inerrancy in John 17:17. He said in His prayer, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."

Number three, Jesus affirmed the Scriptures' dependability in Matthew 5:17-18. He said, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled."

After Jesus had risen from the dead and He was walking with His disciples on the road to Emmaus, He said to them, "O fools..."—in the King James Bible—"...and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" Then Jesus gave them a Bible study. He was telling them that they should be listening to the Word and remembering the Word.

At this time their eyes were closed to who Jesus was, but later on when they got to Emmaus and invited Jesus to eat with them and Jesus prayed at the meal, their eyes were opened to who He was. Then Jesus disappeared from them. They said to each other, "Did not our heart burn within us..."—they got spiritual heartburn—"...while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" How marvelous that is. So Jesus used the Word of God.

Lastly, Jesus believed in the historicity of the Word of God. In Matthew 19:4-5, Jesus said that there was an Adam and an Eve. He said, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?"

I hear modern, progressive preachers say that there was no Adam and Eve. They say, "It was just mythological language, just a fairy tale. It's just trying to convey spiritual meaning. It's not based in reality." Then why is Jesus called "the last Adam"? If there was no Adam and Eve, then there was no fall, and if there was no fall, then there is no sin, and if there is no sin, we don't need a Savior. But Jesus came to redeem us from sin. He believed in Adam and Eve, and I do too.

Jesus mentioned Noah and the flood in Matthew 24:37-39. "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."

Jesus believed in Noah and a big flood, and so do I. People may say, "You're stupid." Well, I'm believing what Jesus believed, so that's fine.

Jesus also believed that Jonah was swallowed by a whale in Matthew 12:40. “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Some preachers are ridiculed, mocked and put down because they believe that Jonah was swallowed by a whale. Jesus believed it.

Jesus believed—and this is a great one for our culture today—in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. That’s a very convenient story to wipe out of your Bible today because of immorality, but it’s in the Bible, and Jesus believed it. In Luke 17:29, Jesus said, “On the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.”

Jesus believed that there was a Moses at the burning bush, and He believed that Moses was instructed to take a serpent of brass and put it on a pole, so that anyone who looked at it would be healed. Jesus said, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,” John 3:14. That is a picture of the Cross of Christ. “There is none righteous, no, not one....For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

This has been an abbreviated list showing Jesus believed in the historicity of the Old Testament. And the list could go on and on. Jesus believed in the inspiration of the Scriptures. He believed in the authority of the Scriptures. I also believe He believed in the clarity and the sufficiency of the Scriptures.

Only if you reject the divine authority of Christ can you reject the divine authority of the Bible. If you are going to reject the Bible’s authority—its inspiration, its inerrancy—then you have to reject Jesus Christ, because He believes the same.

Jesus said that there were two builders. One was wise and one was foolish. The foolish one built his house on sand. And when the rain came and the wind blew, his house was destroyed. He didn’t have the right foundation. But the wise one built his house on the rock, and when the rain came and the wind blew, it stood strong. In explaining the parable, Jesus said that the foolish one was one who hears the Word but doesn’t obey it. The wise one is one who hears the Word of God and puts it into practice in his life.

Build your life upon the rock of God’s unchanging Word.

The first words recorded in the Bible out of the mouth of the devil to Eve were, “Has God indeed said...?” And He keeps on asking that to us. “Did God really say that?”

Satan’s number one attack is against the Bible. Because he knows if we give the Bible its rightful place, we bring glory to God, we bring health to the church and we bring light to the world.