

The Circuit Rider

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THE TEACHER'S TEXT

“THE AUTHORITY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE”

Libraries, all over the world, are filled with more books than our minds can comprehend. However, there is a BOOK that stands out above all books. That BOOK to which I refer is no other than the precious WORD OF GOD, THE HOLY BIBLE. The Bible declares of itself that “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (II Tim. 3:16).

Belief in THE AUTHORITY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE is foundational to all other biblical “doctrine” that we believe and teach. What we believe ABOUT the Bible will form our beliefs in every other area of our dogma. The word, Bible, comes from the Greek word Biblos (Mk. 12:26), meaning a written book, roll, or a scroll. The name HOLY BIBLE that appears on most covers simply means HOLY BOOK. To deny the AUTHORITY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE will lead to false beliefs and practices in daily living. Without the “word of God” (Heb. 4:12), we would be totally ignorant of all divine “doctrine”. Without the Living “Word” (Jh. 1:1,14), there would be no need for the Written Word. I like to refer to Holy Scripture as GOD’S PRINTED VOICE.

Library shelves and bookstores are filled with books on different subjects. The key factor in a book being authoritative in its given field is the expertise of the author. We need to note at this point that the word AUTHOR is part of the word AUTHORITY. What is true of a book of human origin is also true of the BOOK of divine origin, “the Holy Scriptures” (Rom. 1:2). The word “scripture” is “graphe” in the Greek and it means writing or that which is written. The written “word of God” (I Pet. 1:23) is God’s message to sinful men revealing Himself and His plan of redemption for a fallen people. The “word of God” is sometimes referred to in “scripture” as the “oracles (utterances) of God” (Rom. 3:2, Heb. 5:12, I Pet. 4:11). As we study the “doctrine” of BIBLICAL AUTHORITY, we’ll do so by asking and answering three questions.

QUESTION NUMBER ONE
WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE SAY THAT WE BELIEVE IN BIBLICAL
AUTHORITY?

To believe in biblical authority is to believe that the Bible is our sole and final authority in every matter that it addresses. By “faith” (Gal. 3:2-11), we must accept what the Bible has to say as “truth” (Jh. 16:13). Although we cannot understand everything we read in “the Holy Scriptures” (II Tim. 3:15), we must trust God at His “word” (Eph. 6:7) and believe it.

Unfortunately, there are some churches, denominations, and religious groups who do not hold to the Bible as their final authority. Anyone who lifts a mortal man above the authority of God’s “word” rejects biblical authority. Religious cults may use and refer to portions of the Bible, but they hold the writings of some human founder to be equal to or greater than God’s Word. Colossians 2:8 reminds us to “beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ”. Here is a warning even to many churches that profess Christianity, that if they’re not careful, they can let the “tradition of men” or personal feelings set a precedent higher than the authority of Holy Scripture.

QUESTION NUMBER TWO
WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT ITS AUTHORITY?

The Bible says that it was received “by inspiration”. This word, “inspiration”, is translated from the Greek compound word, theopneustos. Theos means God and Pheustos means breathed thus declaring that “the holy scriptures” are a God-breathed product of the “Holy Spirit” (II Pet. 1:20). Just as “God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life: and man became a living soul” (Gen. 2:7) so did God’s “word” become a living Book. Scripture is the written “word” that reveals to us through the power of the “Holy Spirit”, the living “Word” (I Pet. 1:23-25). The “word of God” is as powerful and as eternal as God Himself (Matt. 5:18, 24:35). Apart from divine “inspiration”, the Bible would not be the authoritative Book that it is. We are not to worship the Bible, but the God of the BIBLE!

God used men to write the Bible, but “inspiration” means that He guided in the writing of “all” the words. Belief in the verbal plenary “inspiration” of the Bible is to believe that God superintended the very choice of the words and not merely the thoughts of the writers. Verbal means that not the thoughts alone were inspired, but the very words that were penned. Plenary means that “all” parts of “scripture” were equally inspired and are authoritative. Verbal plenary “inspiration” of “all scripture” means that theology and “doctrine” can even be found in the grammar structure. Verb tenses, sentence structure, moods, voice, and grammar all helps to unravel the theology and “doctrine” found in God’s Word.

To truly believe in the “inspiration” of the Bible means to believe that all the original manuscripts were without error in fact, doctrine, and judgment. It’s believed that the originals were written in three basic languages, Hebrew, Greek, and bits of Aramaic. Some of the Hebrew and Greek words have no full equivalent when translated over into English. Therefore,

even the best scholars sometimes differ as to the exact meaning of certain words. Since none of the original manuscripts exist, the old manuscripts that we do have are merely copies of copies. If the original Hebrew and Greek could be understood in their intended sense, then we would discover no contradictions in the Bible whatsoever. Because of the translation process, there may appear to be some contradictions, but a thorough “study” will reveal no contradictions at all. However, there does appear to be some scribal errors that were made in copying the manuscripts. These were often made by omitting either a letter or perhaps even the entire word, or more than a word (II Kings 24:8, II Chron. 36:9). Sometimes slips were made in spelling or transposing numbers. Some copyists were more exact than others were, but generally, great care was taken to copy correctly. We just need to remember when we come across one of these scribal errors that the copying was done by human fallible hands, just as printing presses are run today by imperfect operators.

Although the original autographs are nowhere to be found today, we believe that God’s Word is inerrant because He not only inspired it, but also has preserved it down through the centuries in copies from the originals. Much care was no doubt exercised in copying the “scriptures” from one manuscript to another. But, along the way, some scribal errors (minute differences) were made, but belief in preservation means that NO significant error was made that would alter the transmission of divine TRUTH. The transcribers of the old manuscripts were agents of God’s providence in preserving and transmitting “the Holy Scriptures” to us. Comparing manuscript to manuscript will bear out the remarkable providence of God in preserving the TRUTH of His Word. Naturally, some manuscripts are more reliable than others are. Therefore, it’s best to use a translation as your main source of study that’s from the better manuscripts. All copies of Scripture were made by fallible hands and are become sufficient for our study of divine Truth. Likewise, so are many language translations yet sufficient for sinful man to have access to God’s Word today. The various versions and translations of Scripture cannot claim infallibility because translations will vary with each individual translator. The ONE WHO wrote this infallible Book that we call the Bible is the only infallible interpreter of it. His work of teaching “truth” (Jh. 16:13) to us is no more mysterious than His work of sovereign grace in the salvation of a sinner. Without an understanding of God’s Word, we’ll not know how to travel the highway of life in an acceptable manner pleasing unto the Lord (Ps. 119:105). To properly interpret Scripture often involves what is called a study of deep grammar, looking at how the words are used in linguistics, semantics, and textual analysis. Constructing theology to suit our own fancies by cutting and pasting verses together is a butchering up of God’s Word and a tampering with something that is most sacred. When the Bible speaks of being of no “private interpretation” (II Pet. 1:20), it’s not referring to interpretation as we know it, but to the origin of the Word.

Divine “inspiration” makes the Bible the WORD OF GOD and not simply a book that contains the Word of God. To say that it CONTAINS the Word of God is to say that some of it is inspired and some is not. The Bible does not CONTAIN the Word of God as a pile of chaff contains some wheat. The Bible in all parts is nothing less than the very WORD OF GOD in its entirety. Holy Scripture is the only divinely inspired Book that this world has ever known and without knowing the author, one cannot know the BOOK. Therefore, the Bible proclaims the testimony of God and to reject its testimony is to call God a liar. The Bible proclaims the precepts of God and to disobey His commands is to rebel against the highest authority of all.

Scripture proclaims the promises of God and to refuse to accept them is to miss out on the greatest blessings of life in both time and eternity.

The Bible says, “all scripture is given by inspiration”. This means that “all” sixty-six different books (some historical, poetical, etc.) that make up the canon of Scripture did not gradually become accepted as inspired, but were immediately at the time they were written. Even though this declaration of “inspiration” is recorded in the New Testament, it’s all inclusive of the entire Bible. To believe in preservation as well as “inspiration” is to believe that canonicity rests on “inspiration”. The word canon means RULE and it refers to the SINGLE VOLUME, comprised of 66 different books, that forms the MEASURING RULE for our faith and practice. We believe that the Bible we now have is complete and no new books are ever to be added to it. The Bible teaches that both the Old and New Testament writers of Scripture were inspired (I Pet. 1:20-21). The origin of Scripture was not found in man’s natural ability, but in the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. “Holy men of God” were controlled by the Holy Spirit in everything they wrote. Belief in the divine “inspiration” of Scripture is a belief that both the Old and New Testaments, including the first 13 chapters of Genesis, is a belief in MIRACLES simply because God’s written Word is a supernatural phenomena. The prophets “in old time”, such as Moses and Jeremiah, claimed to have received “the word of the Lord” (Deut. 18:18, Jer. 1:2,4,9). Such New Testament writers as Paul claimed to “write” the “commandments of the Lord” (I Cor. 14:37, Gal. 1:11-12, I Thess. 2:13).

The Bible says that “God” wrote His Word. Holy Scripture is the only written revelation that “God” has ever given to man. It’s the only Book ever authored by “God” through chosen human instruments. Some 40 different writers were inspired over a period of about 1,600 years to write under divine control. These writers simply became vessels or vehicles through whom “God” conveyed His recorded message to man. These men who wrote were not robots, machines, or human computers who wrote without any particular literary style. The distinctive style of each writer is apparent whether they were writing history, poetry, or doctrine. These writers were under such providential control of God that He used their humanity to record inerrant Truth. Before a single book could be placed in the canon collection, it had to pass the test. An Old Testament writer had to bear the marks of a prophet and a New Testament writer had to be apostolic. Only God could have written a BOOK like this over so many years and for all of it to be in perfect agreement. The only way to explain the unity of the Bible is upon the ground of divine authorship. Human writers from varied backgrounds, ranging from kings and scholars to herdsmen and fishermen, were inspired by the Holy Spirit to pen God’s Word. Apart from Scripture, there is NO authoritative standard for men because it’s the only Book written by the Creator of man Himself.

The Bible says that it is “profitable for doctrine”. God wants us to be knowledgeable of Him and of His Holy will for our lives. That’s why He has recorded His Word for us so that we can come to know Him personally (Rom. 10:17). After coming to know Him, it’s through His Word that we can mature and grow spiritually. A study of Scripture enables a “child” (II Tim. 3:15) of God to develop into a “man of God” (II Tim. 3:17). God does not want His children to remain spiritual babes in Christ because such may be subject to being “carnal” (I Cor. 3:1-2). Hopefully, believers can someday leave the “milk” of the Word and become skillful and able to digest the “meat” of the Word (Heb. 5:12-14).

QUESTION NUMBER THREE
WHAT DID CHRIST THINK ABOUT THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE?

By submitting Himself to the teachings of Scripture, Jesus confirmed its divine authority (Matt. 22:29). Christ declared that “the scripture cannot be broken” (Jh. 10:35). The word, broken, in the Greek is the work, *luo*, meaning that it cannot be annulled, denied, destroyed, or dissolved. Frequently, Jesus referred to and quoted from the Old Testament Scriptures (Matt. 19:4 referring to Gen. 2:24 & Lk. 10:7 referring to Deut. 25:4). From the beginning to the end of His earthly life, Jesus yielded Himself in perfect fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. As a child, Christ subjected Himself to Mary and Joseph, just as the Old Testament commanded (Lk. 2:51).

When Jesus launched His public ministry, following His baptism, He reaffirmed His love for the Word and the power therein by quoting it when tempted (Matt. 4:4,7,10). In death, He became the perfect “Passover” (I Cor. 5:7) “Lamb” (Jh. 1:29) as our Substitute for the penalty of sin. Three days after Calvary, He proved His deity and power by conquering death, hell, and the grave (Matt. 26:61-62).

IN CONCLUSION

To believe in the AUTHORITY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE is to believe that it is a Book from God to man. To truly believe that it is a Book from God means that we should want to read and obey it. To genuinely believe in the inerrancy of Scripture is not a matter that we leave for theologians alone, but apply ourselves in every area of living. Bible believing Christians will acknowledge the entire Word of God as their sole and final authority for FAITH and PRACTICE. To do so, means that we not only believe it, but also try to live by it. Since this Book is a supernatural Book, it can only be accepted by FAITH and understood by the supernatural aid of the Holy Spirit (Jh. 14:17,26, 15:26, 16:13). Any human attempt to convince an unregenerate soul of the divine origin of the Scriptures is useless (I Cor. 2:14). One can only be fully persuaded of God’s infallible Truth and the divine authority of the Bible by means of the internal work of the Holy Spirit.

Down through the ages, no Book has ever been attacked like the Word of God, but the more it’s attacked, the stronger it becomes (Isa. 40:8). Governments have outlawed it and forces have tried to destroy it. Infidels have ridiculed it, liberals have denied it, and Hell has united against it, but yet the Holy Scripture has survived. As Bible believing Christians, our utmost desire should be to become rooted and grounded in this great “doctrine” of Biblical Authority and Divine Inspiration! We need to be absolutely convinced that the Bible is the very Word of God! Since all other doctrines are derived from the Scriptures and rests upon it’s authority; this doctrine of divine inspiration is the guardian of all the others. If one is confused on the doctrine of inspiration, needless to say, he will be confused on all the others. Sad to say, but the Bible is a Book that is being terribly neglected in individual lives, in our homes, in our schools, in our nation, and yes, even in many of our institutionalized churches. Because of its divine authority, it deserves its rightful and honored place in all the affairs of all men. The Bible is a Book that will keep us from “sin” or else “sin” will keep us from this Book (Ps. 119:11).

A MINISTRY UPDATE

We are glad to report much progress since the publication of our last quarterly paper in July. I never thought that we would be able to report that which we are about to say in so short a period of our existence. In our first edition of *THE CIRCUIT RIDER*, we announced that the State of North Carolina as of June 30, 2006, recognized us as a non-profit corporation. Since that date, the IRS has granted us 501c3 status, meaning that we have been granted the privilege of receiving tax deductible contributions on both the Federal and State level. The State of North Carolina has also granted us the privilege of filing to receive a refund of state sales tax that we spend as a ministry. We have also purchased a new computer over which we plan to do the radio recordings. The Tascam unit is now connected and the Cubase software is installed. I'm in the process of learning how to use it. I've received instruction on two different occasions by men who were knowledgeable of this equipment and I'm glad to report that I'm making progress. However, there is still much to learn. Therefore, as the Lord brings me to your mind, I would appreciate you praying for me as "this old dog tries to learn new tricks". Our goal is to begin broadcasting on radio sometime toward the end of 2008. This Bible teaching radio ministry will be sponsored by contributors who are led by the Holy Spirit to help us get out the Word of God. The name for our broadcast will be *Covenant of Grace Radio*, which will operate under the umbrella of **Covenant of Grace Ministries**. All donations should be made payable to **COVENANT OF GRACE MINISTRIES** and mailed to 2704 Fairway Drive, Greensboro, NC 27408. A tax-deductible receipt will be mailed to each contributor at the end of each year. Thank you for your partnership with us in this ministry. Above all, I would like to request of you as Paul requested of the Thessalonians, "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you" (II Thess. 3:1).

Because of His Sovereign Grace,

.....Burley W. Moore

"The GRACE of our LORD JESUS CHRIST be with you all" (II Thess. 3:18)