Section: Doctrine of Scripture

**TEACHING NOTES**

**Q22. What is the Bible?**

The Bible is God’s inspired, infallible, inerrant, authoritative, written word.

I’m really excited to dig into these next three lessons with you about scripture. Scripture is probably one of, if not THE, most attacked object of the Christian faith. Many churches, through faulty theology/understanding have failed to teach on the parts of our faith that are most challenged. The concern is, if we teach on these challenging things it may lead some astray. Though I understand the concern for leading well, the theological issue is thinking that we can convince people to remain Christians or people can be convinced to stop being Christians. What we see God reveal in His word is that for those whom He gives saving faith to, nothing can change their minds because they truly have new heart that God has given them and are forever united with Christ. So we don’t shy away from these things at Disciples church because we know that those who are truly God’s cannot be taken away by the world. Therefore it seems a much wiser step to provide you with the proper understanding of these challenges and therefore an even surer foundation for when unbelievers (even those of another religion) attack our faith.

That being said we want to start with God’s word and the surety we have in it, then next week we can look deeper at the attacks upon it. (I will bring some of those attacks into the conversation this week but we are saving the primary load of those for the coming weeks.)

In order to rightly understand God’s word as being inspired, infallible, inerrant, authoritative, and written, we need to first understand what revelation is and why we have it.

* **Intro**

What is revelation?

It would be helpful for our time tonight to unpack a brief explanation of what revelation is, and the necessity of revelation. Revelation is an important concept, if God has not made Himself and His intent for creation known, we would never have revelation of truth from the only all-knowing source and therefore we could never be certain about anything.

**ILL: Here’s what I mean, if I said this podium is 48”s, *but I could be wrong*. Do I actually know this podium is 48”s? Of course Not! If I could be wrong then I do not KNOW how tall this podium is. Now, what if I got out a measuring tape and stretched it out and said, yes it’s exactly 48”s.**

**Did I know it was 48”’s when I said I think its 48”s or did I just guess correctly? Well, I thought it was 48”’s but *I didn’t know for sure*. Even though I had guessed correctly it was still a guess and I didn’t actually know.**

**Now, if I measured the podium and it was 48”’s, did I originally guess correctly?**

**Are you sure? How do I know the measuring tape I used was correct? For that matter how do I know my eyes worked properly and I actually read the correct line for the measurement? How about this, how do I know 48”’s yesterday or whenever the tape measurer was made is still actually 48”’s today? I know this sounds like a bunch of philosophical jargon to simply make you feel confused, however let me show you that these thoughts and ideas are actually extremely important for us to understand when it comes to the topic of revelation. You see we take things for granted every day, all people do, even those who deny the God that scripture declares they know. Things like the uniformity in nature or the reliability of our senses like seeing, feeling, hearing, and tasting. We assume these things to be reliable sources for understanding things. However, unless we start with God, we can only assume. We are actually unable to justify our assumptions.**

**If you were here during our apologetic series this should be familiar to you. One of the statements that were made multiple times is that unless you have exhaustive knowledge of all things, you cannot be certain of any truth you claim to have. Like the truth that this podium is 48”’s. Now if the statement I made about exhaustive knowledge is true, and it is, then what can we do? How can we live? I mean we live as if we know certain things to be true and we are certain of it. But since we are limited in our knowledge how can we be so certain why do we live like this?**

**Well as Christians you ought to know the answer to this. We live this way, and so does the lost world around us, because we are made in the image of God and live in His world. God, who does know all things exhaustively, has revealed truth to us in His world. This is why we live like we know things for certain, because we do know things for certain for God has certainly revealed things to us and He cannot be wrong.**

**However, we (believers, and the world around us) fail to acknowledge all the time why we can know things for certain. We can know things for certain because God, who cannot be wrong, has revealed things to us. Things like the reality that He has made our senses, and they are (for the most part) reliable. Things like the reality that He upholds the universe by the word of His power, and so we can count on uniformity in nature (for example, 48”’s yesterday will still be 48”’s today even though time has passed). I can be confident that this podium is 48”’s because God has revealed truth in the world around us, (general revelation), and in His word (special revelation). Truth that consists of His upholding the universe and of His righteous expectations of His creation. God has made all things and He expects mankind in particular to use their senses to honor Him, proving that our senses must be in some way trustworthy (though not perfectly). If this sounds confusing I’d encourage you to go back to our apologetics lessons to get a fuller understanding. For tonight’s purpose what I want us to see is that unless God (the only all-knowing Being, as we have taught already in our catechism) revealed truth to us, then we could not live as if we had any certainty about anything. This is because what we don’t know (and that’s probably more than we like to admit) could prove what we think we know to be wrong. We are desperate for revelation from a source that has infinite knowledge and cannot be wrong or no one can have truth at all.**

So when we talk about God revealing Himself to us we have to see the weight of this reality. If God did not reveal Himself to us we would exist in utter chaos not knowing if we could trust one second to be like the next. When someone does NOT test the chair they sit in, before they sit down, they reveal that they know the God who made them. They reveal their trust in the uniformity of nature which cannot exist apart from God. This is why they have no defense (Romans 1) for their suppression of the truth of God. They reveal they trust in some form of uniformity off nature which can only be explained by God who upholds the universe. There is no other explanation!

You see without the doctrine of revelation we would have no hope at all. We would be unable to know God and what He expected of us. Revelation is why we live in a way where we proclaim to know truth. Truth could not be truth unless the all-knowing God has revealed it to us—this is what is meant by revelation. Apart from God’s revelation, we would live in a world that tries to explain truth as being relative (sound familiar?). This is why the world around us tries to say everyone can have their own truth as long as you don’t force that truth on anyone else, but by saying this aren’t they forcing their truth upon us? This worldview refutes itself and is left with absurdity because it has denied God, and therefore it cannot and does not exist in a consistent manner. This world view can’t be consistent because we MOST CERTAINLY live in God’s world, a world where He has revealed truth therefore we will live with that truth as a real reality. Since this relativistic worldview suppresses their knowledge of God, the truth giver, all other reasoning it uses for its so called truth will prove to be inconsistent or lacking justification.

Again this can all be found in our apologetics lessons, however I would not be setting the stage well for discussing the Bible, if I don’t begin with the necessity of having God’s revelation in our lives. With that let’s talk a little more about the basics of revelation.

1. Basic ideas of revelation:
2. General revelation:

God reveals Himself and other truths to us, through the creation around us. We call this general revelation. This revelation is not sufficient for salvation, however it is sufficient to hold all who suppress the truth they know about God accountable on the Day of Judgment. This is the clear teaching from Romans chapter 1.

**Romans 1:18-21** **For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.**

See with clarity here, God’s general revelation through His creation is a clear enough revelation of Himself that all mankind who suppress the truth God revealed in creation will be without a defense (without excuse). They will have no apologetic on the Day of Judgment because they have suppressed a truth that God has clearly revealed. This general revelation does not say that they could rightly trust in Christ and be saved, it only speaks to their lack of righteousness for active suppressing of the truth of God, who created the world around them. So general revelation is the universe around us, all the things that God has created and has revealed to the creation since the beginning of time.

The 1689 Confession of the Christian Faith says this, this way: “The light of nature and the works of creation and providence so clearly demonstrate the goodness, wisdom, and power of God that people are left without excuse; however, these demonstrations are not sufficient to give the knowledge of God and his will that is necessary for salvation.”

1. Special revelation:

Special revelation is God’s word being given to us through His direct interaction with the prophets of the Old Testament, and Christ’s direct interaction with the Apostles and Prophets of the New Testament.

The 1689 Confession of Faith again: “The Lord was pleased at different times and in various ways to reveal himself and to declare his will to his church. To preserve and propagate the truth better and to establish and comfort the church with greater certainty against the corruption of the flesh and the malice of Satan and the world, the Lord put this revelation completely in writing. Therefore, the Holy Scriptures are absolutely necessary, because God’s former ways of revealing his will to his people have now ceased.” “The Holy Scriptures, or the Word of God written, consist of all the books of the Old and New Testaments.” The 66 Books that you have in your Bible.

**1 Thessalonians 2:13 And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.**

When the believers in Thessalonica received the word of God (notice Paul says this was the word they had heard from them, meaning communication from the Apostles) they accepted it for what it really is, God’s word, the very word which was at work in them. This beautiful display of believers seeing the Apostolic/Prophetic testimony as God’s words to them and not as man’s words reveals the truth that though men delivered this word, it was the very words of God. It was God’s words that caused them to be moved unto growing in holiness, not man’s words. You see the Scriptures (which is where we now have the Apostolic/Prophetic testimony) are not the words of mere men, they are not the words of poets or philosophers, NO these are God’s very words—given through His appointed messengers!

**Hebrews 4:12For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.**

God’s word that is living and active.

For the believer, God’s word transforms us! It is a most powerful revelation from God unto us who have been given faith. It works in us believers to produce righteous fruit. God’s word does not leave us rough and broken, distorted in our sin. God’s word refines us, it cuts us, it transforms us into the image of Christ. It does this because it is truth, it removes false beliefs and ideas, and transforms us into the likeness of the owner and giver of truth, Christ Jesus Himself. Mankind was created be image bearers of God, God’s word is a vital revelation that causes us to rightly be what we were created to be! This is what Jesus himself prayed for in John 17.

**John 17:17Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.**

God’s word is His special revelation to us. As such we can rest confident that it is truth, because the giver of this revelation cannot lie. God’s word, the truth, is what (by the power of the Holy Spirit) leads us into sanctification. It is our vital source of nourishment into maturity and Christ likeness. It does so much more than this as well but we will dig into that as we continue.

The truth of God’s special revelation unto us are also the words of eternal life!

**John 6:66-69 After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”**

“Where could we go,” declared Peter, “you have the words of eternal life!”

God’s words are the words of eternal life. In fact it is very clear that we are to live by God’s words, by His special revelation of Himself to us. God has revealed truth to us in a special way through His word. This is why those who take God’s word serious and seek to understand it rightly, can live in a consistent way with the world around us. Both the world around us and God’s word reveal God’s truth to us, they will not conflict with each other.

God’s special revelation through His word has purpose and power, it never fails to accomplish what it was sent forth to accomplish:

**Isaiah 55:10-11 “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”**

Just as God sovereignly controls the weather, so God also sovereignly controls His word. This is why He has declared that His word ***WILL*** accomplish all that He has sent it to accomplish. This is **HUGE**, God, who sovereignly controls all things, declares (or reveals to us) that He sent His word to do a work, and that He will ensure that His word completes the work it was sent to do! God’s word will not return to Him empty, it will accomplish all God’s Holy purpose. This is one way God assures us that His revelation to us, in His word, is indeed authoritative and powerful, that it indeed changes us because He has purposed that it would!

This is also one of the reasons Disciples church holds with such high regard the word of God. We preach the word, we teach the word, we are corrected by the word, and we live in and by the word of God! God was gracious to reveal Himself to us in His word, that we may have truth and be certain of it!

With that introduction, let’s turn to the first point of our answer tonight.

* **The Bible is God’s inspired written word.**

The go-to passage on the inspiration of God’s word is found in 2nd Timothy, please open your bibles to this passage and see these words:

**2 Timothy 3:10-4:5 10You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, 11my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. 12Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 13while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it 15and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**

**1I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: 2preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 3For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. 5As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.**

Chapter 3:16 says, “all scripture is God breathed.” This term in the Greek is theopneustos. This is the combining of two words, Theo (meaning God) and pneustos (meaning breath or breathed). The most accurate way to explain what is meant by this word is this:

**ILL: Everyone take your right hand and hold it in front of your mouth. Now in case you’re soft spoken you may need to hold your hand closer than others. Okay with authority, say the word “hello.” Say it again one more time but say it loudly. Do you feel your breath upon your hand as you spoke? That is really what the word theopneustos means. God breathed words. The words of scripture are here defined by Paul as God’s breathed out words. The breath you felt on your hands when you spoke would be likened to the words of scripture that faithful men had written down on behalf of God as being God’s words breathed out through the writers. This is vitally important because this reality really gives weight to the other terms we used to describe God’s word in our catechism answer.**

Richard Muller defines authority like this: *Authority is the power, dignity, or influence of a work which derives from its author.*

He goes on to define the authority of scripture like this: *The authority of scripture comes from the Power or genuineness of scripture which rests on its* ***inspiration*** *and therefore on the absolute authority of God the primary author of scripture.*

You see for us to rightly understand the authority of God’s word we must start with rightly understanding the inspiration of God’s word. Because authority is directly connected to the author we need to get this right.

As we’ve considered before, words often take on new meanings over time. Some words mean more than one thing in our culture. The word inspired is used broadly today in our culture. For an example of a different way it’s used, we use it when we see a smog filtered sunset.

The amazing colors our smog produces may cause us to be “inspired.” Perhaps we are inspired when someone completes a very difficult physical goal. When we see someone else accomplish a truly difficult task, it inspires us to try harder at the difficult tasks we face. This is a common use of the word inspiration in our current age, however we need to be very careful because that’s not what Paul meant when he wrote theopneustos.

In some translations, this word theopneustos is translated as “inspired.” Perhaps some of you may have tripped up if you were following along with me as we read the Timothy passage, because many translations use the word inspired instead of the phrase God-breathed. I like that the ESV translates the Greek word as “God breathed” is because it is a helpful translation of Theopneustos—it is less likely to be confused with other ideas of what “inspired” might mean

Paul has a very exclusive meaning when he uses this term and he only ever applied it to God’s word. In fact this term may have actually be invented by Paul to describe exactly what He intended to say. Paul combines the Greek word for God and for breath in order to convey his meaning that God-breathed out the scriptures.

What Paul is urging Timothy to see is that scripture is so important, its authority is so fundamental, that Timothy should regard scripture as the words of the breath of God. Paul is calling Timothy to focus on God’s word. I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ who is to judge the living and the dead... PREACH THE WORD!

Dr. Renihan a favorite theologian of ours said this in a lesson he taught on the authority of scripture:

“God gave writings which were His word and which came to be collected and we call it the bible. Scripture is God’s breath which takes the form of words. It has the sole origin of God and it is the means by which God himself delivers it to us as truth. This is what Paul is saying to Timothy and therefore to the church.”

When it comes to the term inspiration, we need to see that Scripture is top down, it’s the word of God to us.

The great question of where did we come from or why are we here has always been asked and in our lostness we have come up with many answers.

Ideas of human autonomy, rationality, and science have often been credited with the ability to answer this question. Post modernity (a combining of these views) also claims to be able to answer this question from within. All of these world views have a problem with the idea that the answers to the big questions are alien to us, that they won’t be found in our own head, but that those answers come from above us. Those answers come from God.

That’s difficult for someone in the modern age to grasp, the idea that they would have to submit to an ancient book. This is likely made more difficult because the bible was penned by real human authors and their personality is preserved in the text. Paul reads different than John, who reads different than Peter, so on and so forth. While the bible is a human book (in that God used specific Humans to pen it) and, as we are considering, it is also a divine book.

The attempt of the secular worldview is to say scripture is simply a human book like any other religious book that’s out there.

We can understand that this book is written by men who were carried along by the Holy Spirit, and therefore there are human characteristics shining through the scriptures, the secular worldview tends to attack this point. The reasoning here is simple and yet quite complicated. You see if these are the mere words of men then we can ignore them as such. That’s simple, an unbeliever attacks the word of God to discredit its divine authority so that they do not have to bow the knee to the divine author. When it comes to submitting to God and the necessity of faith we can say all of this is oh so complicated. Unless God gives new life to the spiritually dead person they will not be able to discern these things because they are spiritual. Now I’m not arguing this as an apologetic, I am making a theological point. God’s word is divine and was written down by His chosen human authors.

Humans did not enter into a trance when they wrote scripture, however the words they wrote were most certainly the words God breathed out **through** the human authors themselves. Now if we understand properly the sovereignty of God in all things this idea that the Word of God is breathed out by Him through human authors should not be a struggle or sound confusing. Think back to Matt’s lesson on 1st and 2nd causes and this actually becomes very clear. This is not an act where only God as the first cause moved, it was also an act where God as the first cause ensured that the human authors as the second cause **properly** wrote the words God wanted written as His breathed out words.

**2 Peter 1:16,21 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty…..21For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**

Inspiration is a top down revelation, from God to us. It is NOT a bottom up written declaration of what man thinks of God. We see this all throughout the bible. Paul says we would do well to listen to these words because they are God’s words. Because Paul himself speaks for God as an Apostle. Paul makes it clear that these are not his ideas but God’s. In the Old Testament you see it over and over again in the usage of the phrase, *thus says the Lord*. Christ did this all throughout His earthly ministry. When confronted with a challenge to put an end to the debate Jesus often said, *have you not read*…? as if the prophetic and very written words of God are the final authority creation needs to look to.

Jesus did something unique during His sermon on the mount. He would quote Old Testament scripture by saying, “you have heard it said.” Then He would speak and say, “but I claim to you.” This was something no other human had ever done. They did not do this because they could not stand and say that they were God and therefore the words they were speaking were divine. But Jesus could and He did! Jesus did this as a way of showing His own divine authority.

As a side note, when Jesus did this, He was not contradicting what God had previously revealed in His word. Jesus wasn’t saying you’ve heard it said and that is wrong. He was actually revealing to a *greater degree* not only what was previously said, but His authority to reveal it in a greater way by saying “I say!”

The word of God declares over and over again to be the word of God. The reality is that people, and unfortunately professing Christians, truly do not want to submit to the written word as Gods very word. If we can hold another view we can still proclaim to be believers but we can decide for ourselves what God meant instead of being challenged by what God actually said. Church this is a horrible view that places human autonomy as the ruler on the throne rather than trusting and abiding in/submitting to God’s revealed authority in His word.

So we start with inspiration because the scriptures self-attestation claims that it is God’s very breathed out words. The human authors who wrote God’s words down were carried along by the Holy Spirit as a second cause for the producing of the bible. Over and over again we see that God ensured that His words were what they proclaimed.

Now does this mean that the scriptures you hold in your hand today are exactly what the original authors wrote down?! If you remember our definition of inerrancy it declares that the *original writing*s were inerrant. Through translation and transmission we have what theologians call *textual variants*. I’m going to leave you hanging a bit and come back to this topic in my next lesson. For now suffice it to say, you can trust the word of God that you have in your hand. In fact as I’ll teach through these lessons it is the most reliable book of antiquity that we have.

Let’s move on to infallibility.

* **The Bible is God’s Infallible written word:**

Infallibility of Scripture (Infallible): The Bible never fails. It is completely trustworthy as the sole objective source of all God has given us about Himself, His plan for humanity, and the life of faith. The Bible will not fail to accomplish its purpose.

**Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, that He should lie, or a son of man, that He should change His mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?”**

We read this verse earlier but it is worth seeing again!

**Isaiah 55:10-11 “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”**

**Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.**

God has a very specific purpose for His revelation to us through His word. He declares that word He has sent forth will accomplish all of its purposes. Church are you struggling to obey God? Then go to His word. Are you struggling to understand who God is? Then go to His word. We are a most blessed people. We have unlimited access to God’s word and can read, study, sing, think upon and meditate on God’s word any time we like. We can read multiple translations in our own language. Many people groups only have one translation. We can go online and look up the original language used and see how the words were used and why they were translated the way they were. God has given us His word and He has promised us that it will not return void! Take up God’s word church! Do not rest on sermons alone. Rest in the word of God—day in and day out. In your comings and goings in life, when someone presents to you something unfamiliar ask them where they see that in scripture.

Ultimately if the bible is God’s words and He declares His words will not fail then we do not need to dig deeper into this point. God who cannot fail has said His word also cannot fail and therefore we must believe that this is true! I really spent the majority of our time tonight on inspiration and we can quickly see why right? If God’s word is indeed inspired or breathed out by Himself then we can also know that it will accomplish all that it proclaims it will.

This ought to bring such comfort to us. God will not leave us nor forsake us. God will have all of His elect, so we can confidently preach the word to even the most hateful of critics. When we do this we are trusting in God’s promise to make His word effectively produce His intended results. We are resting in the promises He has made to us through His word that they will be kept. The infallibility of God’s word is truly a very practical reality that we must apply to our daily lives!

So what about inerrancy then?

* **The Bible is God’s inerrant written word:**

Inerrancy of Scripture (Inerrant): The Bible, in the original manuscripts, is without error in all its teaching; it does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact. The Bible is a reflection of its perfect Author.

Essentially “Inerrancy is the view that when all the facts become known, they will demonstrate that the bible (in its original autographs and correctly interpreted) is entirely true and never false in all it affirms, whether that relates to doctrines or ethics or to the social, physical, or life sciences.”

In fact when the Sadducees tried to trick Jesus, he held them accountable to the word that was written thousands of years prior to the lives of those men. The Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection. They questioned Jesus by saying if a man died and left his wife a widow then the brother is supposed to take her, what if the husband dies 7 times. Whose wife will she be in the resurrection?

Matthew 22:29-32 But Jesus answered them, “You are wrong, because you know neither the **Scriptures** nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. And as for the resurrection of the dead, **have you not read what was said to you by God**: ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.”

In this passage Jesus said *have you not read what God said to you*, when He did this He was referring to scripture that was written thousands of years prior to the men who were questioning Him were even alive. Jesus held these men accountable to the written word given years prior as if God had spoken it to them directly. Jesus could only do this if the word of God was infallible. If the word of God were not infallible, Christ would not have held them in such a high regard nor held men accountable to what they had taught.

Christ believed in the preservation of scripture and the inspiration of scripture. Jesus (who is truly, eternally God—the second person of the trinity) was and is the author of scripture. Christ shows His affirmation that the scriptures were/are God speaking. This is clearly what we aim to draw out when we talk about revelation—special revelation to be more specific. The written word of God was God’s spoken revelation to His people through chosen prophets (men) and Jesus certainly held to this reality in His earthly ministry.

God is big enough and sovereign enough to have written His word through chosen men who were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Since God is the author and He cannot be wrong then it is also true that the original writings (the ones God breathed through the original writers) must be inerrant—for God Himself is inerrant.

Again this is why we started with Inspiration. All of these other truths rely upon the truth that the scriptures are God’s inspired or breathed out word.

**Numbers 23:17, 19 17And he came to him, and behold, he was standing beside his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said to him, “What has the LORD spoken?” …..19God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?**

This is the linking of the character of God, with the word of God. Therefore, we can know His word is true. The passage contrasts God with us. God does not lie or change like we do, He speaks truthfully. This doctrine has been there from the beginning of the church.

Polycarp (who lived in the first century and was said to have been a disciple of the Apostle John) would say things to the church in his writings and then quote scripture (even new testament scripture) as if he knew that that would put the subject to rest because Gods word is truth.

Some people who try and discredit the word of God will claim that the early church really had no idea what belonged in scripture and what the overall doctrine of atonement was truly about. However, what we see in church history is much more consistent than what these people would have you believe.

In the 1970’s, a group of theologians formed a group called international council of inerrancy and produced a statement in 1978 called the Chicago statement of inerrancy. In this statement there are 19 articles on affirmation and denial. Though we don’t have time tonight I’d encourage you at some point this week to look that up and read it. It is a very helpful and solid statement in regards to inerrancy.

To truly know Scripture is the inspired, infallible, inerrant, authoritative, written word of God we don’t need to look any further than the scripture itself. However, when we consider these things, it’s helpful to hear how faithful Bible teachers have taught these things. So, confessions, councils, creeds, and teachings like this are used by God to teach His people as well. Nothing is more authoritative than the word of God, no doubt. Only the word of God has ultimate authority.

**Proverbs 30:5 Every word of God proves true, He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.**

**2 Samuel 7:28 You are God and your words are true, you have promised this good thing to your servant.**

We are finite and we don’t keep all our promises. God is not finite. And He keeps His promises. Every word of God proves true. God cannot lie! If the scriptures are the words of God then they themselves must be true!

Everything that God has given to us as scripture is inspired by God. Therefore the scriptures must be authoritative because they are the words God has declared to His people. Remember Jesus held men accountable to words that were written long before they were born, clearly displaying the purpose of scripture as authoritative.

* **The Bible is God’s authoritative written word:**

Authority of Scripture: As God’s word, the Bible is our rule; it is always the final and authoritative word.

We must see that since God’s word is breathed out by Him, it also carries along with it God’s very own authority. Jesus is the king of kings and the Lord of lords. There is no higher authority for man than Christ Himself. Since this is the case, the words of God carry that same authoritative power.

This means quite simply that when we have to discern between two things we go to the authority of God’s word to do so.

If God’s word declares that He alone is God, and you have a dream that claims there is some other God, which one is wrong? Your experience is not greater than God’s word. If you thought you had the ability to speak in tongues and later found that what God’s word reveals was not what you had experienced then your experience was wrong, not God’s word. Does that make sense? God’s word must be the foundation of truth (final and authoritative word), and in that it can correct us, even over and against our very own experiences. Otherwise passages like 2 Timothy 3:16 would truly bear no weight. If God’s word being breathed out by Him does not carry ultimate authority then Paul’s letter to Timothy doesn’t really make any sense.

Let’s look at it again as we close this section out:

**2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**

You see Paul declares that God’s word does correct you, train you, reprove you, and teach you. He declares that God’s word does make you complete and equip you for every good work.

Paul begins this declaration with the same foundation that I attempted to lay at the start of this lesson. Because scripture is God’s breathed out words, they are inspired by God and therefore reflect the character of God. They are true and our ultimate source of truth, they are profitable and are able to correct us, train us, and help us be complete men of God. God’s word is sufficient, it equips us for every good work.

The 1689: The authority of the Holy Scriptures obligates belief in them. This authority does not depend on the testimony of any person or church but on God the author alone, who is truth itself. Therefore, the Scriptures are to be received because they are the Word of God.

Church if you claim to need some sort of special revelation that God has not given you in His word then you are calling scripture insufficient and therefore you are at odds with God! Let us not do this, God has clearly said to us through His word that what He has chosen to reveal to us and truly to all people at all times are sufficient for the times when He had revealed it. When God had the Old Testament written it was sufficient for those who lived during that time. It declared salvation and right living through what it taught about God.

We are again a very blessed people be alive with the fullest special revelation of God that we can possibly have without Him consummating all things to Himself.

Next week we will begin our time by looking at question 23, who wrote the bible and then we will dive into the trustworthiness of our bible.

* **Closing**

For now as a practical closing point I want to encourage you to consider these truths.

Do you live as if God has spoken—that is the Bible?

Do you submit yourself to the only source of truth the world has—that is the Bible?

Do you regularly look for some sign from God outside of the Bible rather than turning to the sufficient word God has revealed to you in the Bible?

How many of us are missing out on sanctification, growth into Christlikeness, because we spend more time looking to less valuable things even though the very words of God are at our finger tips?

By all means study good things (good books about the Bible for example), enjoy things that are not necessarily eternal, but don’t make them primary things. Don’t waste your life on things that will not bear eternal weight.

If you have been struggling with sin, how have you leaned on the word of God to put it to death?

If you have been struggling with doubt, have you leaned on the word of God to be filled with faith?

The 1689: “The Holy Scriptures are the only sufficient, certain, and infallible standard of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience.”

The bible are the very words of God breathed out, how can we treat them as anything less! The bible is inerrant in its original writings, God cannot error therefore His words cannot error. The bible is infallible, it will not fail to prove itself true and right. It will accomplish all that God has intended it to accomplish. Finally the bible is authoritative, it is God’s word and He rules over all things as our ultimate authority therefore His words that He has graciously given to us must be considered as authoritative and we must go to them to teach us, correct us, reprove us, and equip us for the works that God himself has prepared for us.

I plead with you, do not become wise in your own eyes. It is the error of the those who falsely proclaim to be Christians today. They have left the authority of God’s word because surely we are wiser than the chosen men who wrote it. Those turning away from Scripture approve of all kinds of sin and sinful life styles. They support the death of the helpless and celebrate the murder. And yet some of them even call themselves Christians. Somewhere, at some point, these truths about God’s words have been denied by them and therefore they have become wise in their own eyes.

**2 Peter 3:14-18**

**Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.**

Let’s pray.