

We believe in the infallible, verbal inspiration of the whole Bible and that the Bible is the all-sufficient rule of faith and practice.

There are many societies that have suffered total moral collapse, and in each case the first sign of impending disaster, the first outward mark of inward deterioration, was a shift in their view of the authority of the Word of God. There is an observable link between moral decline and the authority of Scripture, and I would like to introduce this message with two passages that underscore that truth. Please read Psalms 119:160 and 2 Timothy 3:12-17.

Notice how Paul moves from the theme of deterioration of faith and moral collapse to the remedy and cure for the believer, an adherence to the written Word of God. As Paul presented it here, the defense of a Christian in a day of moral decline is a thorough knowledge of the written Scriptures, while any defection from faith which may take place is brought about by abandoning the Scriptures, in attitude or in action.

The Word of God has been under attack for many centuries. Like an ancient fortress it has withstood many assaults. Up to and through the 17th century these attacks were primarily outward. That is, they were an assault from without by men who tried to destroy the Scriptures by direct methods. History is full of accounts of book burnings, papal interdicts, and even the murder of translators of the Word of God. But these outward attacks against the Bible completely failed. In the 18th century a new approach was taken. Instead of sending soldiers to attack the fortress, to continue this illustration, the enemies of the Bible sent workmen, who came offering to remodel the whole structure. They said, in effect, "This is a good, strong building. It simply needs a bit of renovation here and there." They began to rearrange the structure of God's Word. They drained the moat, tore down the wall, removed the doors, and when they were through everything was quite different than it was before. There was no longer any fortress or defense for those who would seek refuge.

We must first believe Scripture before we can understand it. We will never understand the Word if we keep asking, "Should this passage be here? Is it genuine, is it real? Has it been inserted? Is it a legend? Is it a fairy tale? Is it something that is merely the thinking of the apostles and was never in the mind of Christ?"

AS CHILDREN OF GOD WE MUST HAVE THE SAME VIEW OF SCRIPTURE THAT JESUS HAD

John 10:35; Luke 24:25-27

To put it another way, the authority of the Bible rests squarely on the _____ of Jesus Christ himself.

To be a Christian at all means that we have fully accepted the authority of Jesus. If we have not, we are _____ Christians; we merely wear the name.

We cannot call him Lord, and say he has the right to govern our _____, all our attitudes and ways and that we even trust our eternal destiny into his hands, but we don't trust him when _____ about the creation of man, or the sanctity of marriage, or the sinfulness of certain behavior. We are utterly inconsistent if we take this position.

You may be an old and experienced Christian with a thorough knowledge of the Bible. You may be a brand new Christian who hardly has any knowledge at all of what it says. If you are a Christian at all, and have received eternal life through believing on Jesus, you _____, by that very fact, also be subject to his authority in the matter of accepting or rejecting the Scriptures as _____. That is the first fact.

AS CHRISTIANS, WE MUST HAVE THE SAME VIEW OF SCRIPTURE THAT THE APOSTLES HELD

1 Cor. 15:3; Galatians 1:11,12; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Peter 3:15,16

Jesus and the apostles are our teachers; we are not theirs. We cannot stand and look over the apostles' shoulders and _____ their work. The apostles, in writing the New Testament, declare that their authority is simply the Lord's authority. They, too, rest the authority of _____ squarely upon the authority of the Lord Jesus.

The apostles are very conscious that the _____ of the message they preach are the words of God.

Peter makes it very clear that he accepted Paul's writings as Scripture, and the early churches _____ these apostolic writings as the words of Jesus from the beginning. *2 Peter 3:15,16*

These men who lived in the first century _____ Jesus. They heard his words, ministered in His power throughout the world of their day, and transformed the _____ in which they lived.

Our second fact is that, as Christians, we have no right to a different view of Scripture than that _____ the apostles, or we cannot consistently call ourselves Christians.

If this is our approach, we will never ask, “What does this say to me? What does it mean? Where is the wisdom that I need so desperately in my life?” Those pseudo students and false scholars who feel they are a final authority on what ought to be in the Bible, and what ought not to be there, never seem to be able to understand what the Bible says to them. They exclude themselves from understanding by their attitude of judgment.

Charles Spurgeon’s classic illustration puts it forcefully. He said, “The Bible is like a lion. Who ever heard of defending a lion? Just turn it loose, it will defend itself.” And so will Scripture!

I talk about the change the gospel has made in my own life, how the Bible has explained life to me, and how it has led me from uncertainty into a rich awareness of life. It has led me into a place of rest and peace of heart as well as freedom from the fear that grips the hearts of so many here on Earth.

Today many of God’s children, like Timothy, are attacked by a subtle and devious philosophy that is attempting to undermine the authority of the Word of God, especially in matters of morality. The collapse of moral standards in major parts of human life can be traced directly to false concepts concerning Scripture. We need once again to hear the words of the apostle to his son in the faith, “Remember the things which you have learned from childhood, these sacred writings which are able to establish you, to keep you, to thoroughly prepare you for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:12-17

The Word of God is truth, it is reality, and the one characteristic that marks reality is that it does not change. Truth is always true. If it were true ten thousand years ago, it is still true today. That is why a two thousand-year-old book is as valid today as it ever was. Truth is simply unchangeable. Truth is the final measuring stick of any civilization or any individual life.

WE CAN NEVER DISCOVER THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE WITHOUT FIRST ACCEPTING IT AS TRUE AND AUTHORITATIVE

Hebrews 4:12; Proverbs 2:3,4

We are deeply _____ to scholars gone before for the painstaking work that has been done in Bible knowledge.

There are many translations today that are interesting but not necessarily _____, because they are only paraphrases.

We can never understand the Bible until we believe it first. You cannot understand mathematics unless you first believe the underlying principles that have to do with that part of human knowledge. You cannot understand chemistry unless you are willing to accept the chemical formulas that have been set forth. You cannot believe anything until you accept it as genuine and put it to the test of experience, and this is true of the Word.

One of my favorite expressions is, “The Bible says . . .” I do not debate it with anyone; I do not question it; I simply declare it.

SCRIPTURE DOES NOT NEED TO BE DEFENDED; IT NEEDS TO BE PREACHED

John 4:47, 48

I have approached people with the question, “Do you believe that the Bible is the Word of God?” If they said, “Yes, I do,” we were on solid ground. I knew where to go from there. But when they said to me, as they so frequently do, “No, I don’t,” I did not know what to say next. Where do you go if people reject what you must use as your authority?

All that is necessary is to use the Scriptures. If it is the word of God, it will confirm itself. It will have in itself inherent power and authority.

When I talk with someone who does not accept the Gospel or who challenges the Bible, I do not bother with defense of the Scriptures; I just go right to the Word.

The whole testimony of a church should be that the preaching of the Bible establishes its authority. We do not need to defend it; we need to declare it, and proclaim it.

The choice that is left to us as Christians is simple; it is always the same in every generation: either we accept the Bible as God’s Word to us, His own revelation, His own explanation of the affairs of life and of human history, or, the only other alternative is that we must rest our faith on the shifting, complex, ever-changing authority of modern knowledge and human ability.

It is either Christ or the critics, one or the other. One way leads to moral decline and collapse; the other way brings us to illuminating insights into our own hearts, and into the processes of history and to the place of integrity and character.

LIFE APPLICATION

I made haste, and did not delay to keep Your commandments.

Psalm 119:60

Forever O Lord, Your word is settled in Heaven. Psalm 119:89

Everyone in the community was excited about the brand new football field. Despite the cool crisp air and the slight chance of rain, the turnout was very good for the first night of the season. But what really caught the attention of everyone is when the new bleachers gave way. One of the cement slabs broke in half dropping about eight people to the ground. It was later discovered that there had been no reinforcement steel put in the slab. Were the other slabs built the same or was this an isolated case? The only way to be sure was to thoroughly examine the remaining structure and to start over if need be.

God's Word is strong. His Word is a sure foundation that can withstand the test of time.

There are over 31,000 verses in the Bible, if you were to pick just ONE this week to stand on, which one would it be? What about Joshua 1:8? OR Jeremiah 33:3?

How about putting into practice last week's lesson?

Matthew 22:39 Love thy neighbor as thyself.

Think of something that you would like to do for yourself and then do it for another person instead.

Who is the King of Glory? The LORD strong and mighty...

Psalm 24:8