

Sermon-I Want to Talk to the One In Charge Here

INTRODUCTION to the series on Doctrines

Illustration: Locked Car Door

A woman was at work when she received a phone call that her daughter was very sick with a fever. She left her work and stopped by the pharmacy to get some medication. She went to get back into her car and found that she had locked her keys in the car.

She didn't know what to do, so she called home and told the baby sitter what had happened. The baby sitter told her that her the fever was getting worse. She said, "You might find a coat hanger and use that to open the door."

The woman looked around and found an old rusty coat hanger that had been thrown down on the ground, possibly by someone else who at some time or other had locked their keys in their car. Then she looked at the hanger and said, "I don't know how to use this."

So she bowed her head and asked God to send her some help. Within five minutes an old rusty car pulled up, with a dirty, greasy, bearded man who was wearing an old biker skull rag on his head. The woman thought, "This is what you sent to help me?" But, she was desperate, so she was also very thankful.

The man got out of his car and asked her if he could help. She said, "Yes, my daughter is very sick. I stopped to get her some medication and I locked my keys in my car. I must get home to her. Please, can you use this hanger to unlock my car?"

He said, "Sure". He walked over to the car, and in less than a minute the car was opened. She hugged the man and through her tears she said, "Thank You So Much! You are a very nice man."

The man replied, "Lady, I am not a nice man. I just got out of prison today. I was in prison for car theft."

The woman hugged the man again and with sobbing tears cried out loud, "Oh, Thank you God! You even sent me a Professional!"

Understanding of who God is and our purposes for living are of critical importance. Christianity finds its roots in the teaching and human interaction with God contained within the Old Testament.

Israel was formed by a covenant relationship between God and man, a covenant which God gave and men accepted. The basic framework is not one of rights but of promises and commandments: the promises of God as to what he would do for his people if they were faithful to the covenant, and the commandments of God as to how his people should relate together and to others. His commandments express his plan for his people as an unfolding of his purpose in

creating the human race. The framework of a Christian discussion should simply be: What does God want for the human race? What does God want of us as individual men and women?

Since Christ came 2,000 years ago faith in the One True God has been reshaped into a New covenant, which teaches that the Old Testament Laws have been fulfilled and abrogated or cancelled with Christ's death and replaced with the Law of Christ of the New Covenant.

This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people. Hebrews 8:10

Thus, the New Covenant is a gracious covenant. Those included in the covenant are reconciled to God by grace alone apart from anything they do. Jesus purchased a people by His death on the cross so that all those for whom He died receive full forgiveness of sins.

¹⁷“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. ¹⁹Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. (NIV) Matthew 5:17-20

1. AUTHORITY Legitimacy

Before considering where we should go we first need to determine who we are going to follow.

There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death. Proverbs 14:12

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord.
"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:8-9

Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 1 Corinthians 1:25

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Corinthians 2:14

Traditional Christianity (Legacy)

From the Christian point of view, the question of the authority of the scripture is a question about how to approach God himself. The Scriptures are a norm or criterion for the beliefs and way of

life for Christians. The issue, then, is whether the Scriptures ought to determine the way people think and act? CHRISTIANS view the scriptures as a unique book (or collection of books). The scriptures come from God in a way that no other book has. God is the author of scripture and that scripture is his word which he has spoken through human beings. If these statements are true, or even if they contain some truth, a person's approach to the scriptures cannot be merely detached or scholarly. Each person is approaching a book which is intended to address him or her personally; in fact, it is a book in which God is addressing him or her personally. Scripture is not simply interesting data or thought. Therefore, the way a person talks and thinks about scripture is itself a religious response. (Stephen B. Clark, *The Authority of Scripture*, excerpted from his book, *Man and Woman in Christ*, Chapter 14, (Servant Books, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1980.)

Affirmation: God has all authority, and we accept the Bible as the primary authority by which God communicates to us what God wants us to believe and to do. The New Testament clarifies and sometimes supersedes the Old Testament guidance on faith and life. The primary purpose of the Bible is its message about deliverance from evil by an almighty God. Those who believe the biblical revelation about God's grace and Jesus Christ are granted access to paradise (an eternal life with God). Those who do not believe are eternally separated from God.

The traditional Christian view declares the scriptures (both Old and New Testaments) as highest authority for the beliefs and life of Christians(4). This means that Christians ought to change if they discover that their beliefs contradict those presented for acceptance by scripture or if they discover that their way of life does not conform with that directed by scripture.

A more traditional word for describing the claim scripture has upon the Christian is "canonical." The word "canon" means "rule" in the sense of a "yardstick" or "ruler."(9) Something which is canonical is a standard for measuring or judging something else. In this sense, the canonical scripture is the standard against which all other opinions can be measured. If something is at odds with scripture, it is not Christian and therefore for a Christian not true.

The earliest extant list of the books of the NT, in exactly the number and order in which we presently have them, is written by Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, in his Easter letter of 367.

Map, compass, standard, plumb line

The authority of scripture, in the traditional approach, is grounded in its origin. The scripture is composed of writings which come from God. They contain the highest revelation of God and of his intentions for the human race. The scriptures are not merely human books or collections of human opinion, although they are also these things. They are books which contain God's revelation of himself. When people deal with scripture, they deal with God himself-the creator of the universe, the one who has all power in heaven and earth, and who knows all things. They are dealing with the one whose opinions count, whose word is automatically truth because he knows everything, and because he does not lie. God's words are faithful and true. Therefore, approach the scripture with fear of the Lord.

2. INSPIRED (Infallible and Inerrant)

We accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God. The writers were inspired, moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21), and the resultant writings are inspired, as if breathed or spoken by God (2 Timothy 3:16). The Bible is therefore useful as a guide to salvation through faith in Christ, and sufficient for doctrine, correction, moral and ethical instruction (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (NKJV)

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God[a] may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (NIV) 2 Timothy 3:16-17

"Inspired" means that the New Testament writings are given by God.(11) They are the product of the Holy Spirit, inspiring the human authors to write these books.

For prophesy never had it's origin in the will of man but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:21

32 The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. 33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord's people.
1 Corinthians 14:32-33

"Apostolic" is important for understanding the New Testament's origin in God. Eye witness accounts of the life, ministry death and resurrection of Christ. The apostles are the foundational authorities of the Christian church (Rv 21:14), and the foundational authorities of Christian teaching. Furthermore, they were delegated by Christ to do whatever was needed to establish the Christian people after his resurrection and ascension, and that role included teaching (Mt 28:19-20). They therefore exercised Christ's authority and did not hesitate to speak with his authority (2 Tm 3:6-15; 1 Thes 4:1-2). Clement of Rome, a contemporary of the apostles and a man taught by them, summed up their position in this way: "The gospel was given to the apostles for us by the Lord Jesus Christ; and Jesus the Christ was sent from God. That is to say, Christ received his commission from God, and the apostles theirs from Christ."(14)

"Inspired" and "apostolic" have been chosen here to describe the scripture insofar as it originates in God.

3.Reliability -GPS

17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. (NIV) Romans 10:17

Numerous passages claim to be quotes directly from God (e.g., Exodus 20:1-17

The New Testament affirms the inspiration of the Old Testament, especially in its function of pointing to Jesus Christ (Luke 24:44; John 5:46; Acts 10:43).

Jesus used the Old Testament as thoroughly reliable words of God (Matthew 5:18; Mark 12:35; John 10:35). The sayings of Jesus are accepted as of divine authority (Matthew 24:35; Mark 8:38; John 6:63), and the letters of Paul are also considered Scripture (2 Peter 3:15-16). The early church quoted the New Testament in the same manner as the Old, treating all these writings as God-given words. [The testimony of the Bible to itself is summarized in I. Howard Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982, pages 19-30.]

CONCLUSION - Submission to Scripture

Authority
Inspired
Reliable

If the New Testament is a collection of inspired apostolic writings that are the canon, then it has the highest authority in the life of a Christian. It presents words from God, the Lord of all, and it must be believed and obeyed. To use a term from the New Testament (2 Cor 11:4), Christians must "submit" themselves to it.⁽¹⁸⁾ They must submit their minds, indeed their whole lives, to it.

That submission includes both believing it where the scripture proclaims a fact about the Christian faith, and obeying it where the scripture indicates the Lord's desires. Christians must respond to scripture as something with AUTHORITY in their lives, in such a way that it is enough for them to know that scripture has taught something in order to accept it and follow it. Scriptural teaching is not merely one of many opinions, viewpoints, or theologies. It is the standard against which all other opinions must be measured. If other views do not correspond, they must be rejected.

The concern here is not primarily with an intellectual position, but a question of how people should orient their lives. Approaching scripture is approaching the Lord himself. It should be received as a message from the Lord.

The Christian is the servant (doulos-slave) of Jesus Christ; perhaps a voluntary servant, but a servant nonetheless (Rom 6:16-23).⁽²⁰⁾ He is the person whose life does not belong to himself, but who has given it completely, his mind included, to another-his Lord.

Obedience and love go together. But loving obedience is not content merely to keep the explicit commandments that are solemnly enjoined. Loving obedience also means eagerness to follow his preferences as well and to be formed by all of his desires. Christians who show loving obedience want their lives to be formed by the Lord's desire, so that it is pleasing to him even in the smallest respects. It is eager to discover where the Lord has a preference, and to follow it.