

A Brief Discussion about the Divine Authority of Scripture.

Presented by Gregory B. Washington

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”¹⁹

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”²⁰

First, I confess my bias about Scripture:

- It is God’s breathed, sacred, authoritative, and inerrant Word.
- It is his revelation to mankind which contains that portion of his intended will about himself, his doxological plans for man’s redemption through his Son – Jesus Christ, and the eternal destiny of every human.
- It contains the information necessary for men to learn of their depravity, God’s holiness, and his offer of forgiveness of sins and eternal life to everyone that believes in his son, Jesus Christ.
- Every aspect of Scripture is intended to display some awesome aspect of God.
- It is meant to be understood only by continual personal study, illumination by the Holy Spirit, and applied consistent with its original intentional meaning.

I acknowledge these biases to clarify my position on the divine authority of Scripture.

I theorize that, in addition to the doctrinal and theological dangers caused by the presence of false teachers and false professors in local churches, failure to accept and declare the divine authority of scripture is deceiving and weakening the individual believer and the local Church.

¹¹ And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.²¹

In the previous sessions we briefly discussed proper primary and secondary meaning and application of Scripture, and, literal vs allegorical interpretations of Scripture. These discussions hinged on the facts derived from two theme passages which point to the source and practical purpose of Scripture. The source of Scripture is God, who inspired His Word to and through the Biblical writers. The practical purpose of Scripture is reveal God to man, and, by through that

¹⁹ *The Holy Bible: King James Version.*, electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version. (Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995), 2 Pe 1:20–21.

²⁰ *The Holy Bible: King James Version.*, electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version. (Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995), 2 Ti 3:16–17.

²¹ *The Holy Bible: King James Version.*, electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version. (Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995), Mt 24:11.

revelations carry out is self-glorifying purposes including man's redemption. Every genre of Scripture, (Law, History, Prophecy, Poetry, Wisdom, and Gospel) provides us with details and plans of God's will necessary for us to understand him, his purposes, and our place within those plans. Since God is sovereign, his Word – whether spoken or written – possesses his authority.

“For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”²²

There is, however, a consistent trend on the part of man to reject the divine authority of God's Word in spoken and written form. This trend initially appears when the Serpent confronts Eve in the Garden misrepresenting and out right lying about God's command about “The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil”.

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.²³

The results of our fore-parents failure to recognize and submit to the authority of God's Word was nothing short of tragedy for every generation of man. The Bible records numerous events of men failing to recognize and submit to the authority of God's Word which always ended with some negative consequence.

Currently, we see all types of distortions and perversions of the Bible in the name of various cultural and religious reasons. Gender, ethnicity, patriotism, politicism, prosperity, and new ageism, just to name a few. The consistent theme in these (and many other false or perverted systems) is the deliberate assertion that man-made religious traditions or cultural demands determine the meaning of Scripture. Whoever determines meaning is, in fact, the authority. In short a rebellious world allows human ideas, not God, to determine what Scripture means and how it should be used.

“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death.”²⁴

²² *The Holy Bible: King James Version.*, electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version. (Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995), Heb 4:12.

²³ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*, Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version. (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2009), Ge 3.

²⁴ *The Holy Bible: King James Version.*, electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version. (Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995), Pr 16:25.

“For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith 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.”²⁵

What is it that prompts men to reject or resist the authority of Word of God?

- 1 – Lack of Faith
- 2 – Lack of Obedience
- 3 – Lack of Knowledge
- 4 – Lack of Humility

Lacks of Faith

The authority of God and His Word will not be accepted by those who have not come to faith in Him. Hebrews tell us, “But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”²⁶ Man cannot please God without faith. Why, because he cannot know God or how to please him unless he reveals himself to us. He is willing and ready to do this, but we must be diligent from the time he begins drawing us. From then we must seek, pursue, and lay hold to the precious jewels of Biblical illumination he provides. Paul reminds us “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.”²⁷ Without the Spirit of God giving understanding of the Word man attempts to use his natural senses – which are wholly inadequate.

Lack of faith is also seen by those who doubt and reject God’s authority after coming to faith in him. James reminds us God is willing to give wisdom to those who ask, “But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.”²⁸ Here the person with faith chooses to waver back and forth which results in not gaining the desired wisdom.

If we have come to faith in Christ then accepting and declaring the divine authority of God’s Word is a sacred duty. Failing to carry out this duty has, and will continue to bring mankind grief and tragedy. Distorting or perverting this duty undermines the divine authority of God’s Word. If God’s Word is not authoritative then our faith cannot be valid. Without divine authority the Word is insufficient to declare and perform what God has said.

²⁵ *The Holy Bible: King James Version.*, electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version. (Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995), Is 55:8–9.

²⁶ *The Holy Bible: King James Version.*, electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version. (Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995), Heb 11:6.

²⁷ *The Holy Bible: King James Version.*, electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version. (Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995), 1 Co 2:14.

²⁸ *The Holy Bible: King James Version.*, electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version. (Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995), Jas 1:6–7.

“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.”²⁹

Lack of Obedience

And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.³⁰

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.³¹

In Matthew, Christ explains the foolishness and resulting destruction of the man who fails to obey God’s Word. Obedience is the result of a lived faith not merely a said faith. Obedience says “I demonstrate I believe God’s Word is true and authoritative over my life by submitting to it”. The disobedient man’s behavior proclaims his rejection of God’s authoritative Word. Meanwhile, James provides more detail of the mind of those who hear but do not obey. He says they are deceiving themselves by not responding to and acting based on what they know of Scripture. If we believe God’s Word is divinely authoritative then we should seek to obey it in the light of what we know, and that based on the Word and not the distortions of wicked men.

Lack of Knowledge

Paul instructs Timothy to “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”³² We cannot properly know God’s Word if we do not study. Many claim God gives spiritual illumination without the need for study. I suggest that God gave us a written Word in two testaments for us to study and seek him for understanding. I also believe that knowledge is directly related to the duration and depth to which we study. If we skim the Scriptures the Spirit gives just that. If we dig, labor, pray, wrestle, and meditate through Scripture the Holy Spirit turns carries us from informational exposure to spiritual understanding. Here the writer of Hebrews makes it plain that God “is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him”.³³

²⁹ *The Holy Bible: King James Version.*, electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version. (Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995), Is 55:11.

³⁰ *The Holy Bible: King James Version.*, electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version. (Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995), Mt 7:26–27.

³¹ *The Holy Bible: King James Version.*, electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version. (Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995), Jas 1:22–24.

³² *The Holy Bible: King James Version.*, electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version. (Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995), 2 Ti 2:15.

³³ *The Holy Bible: King James Version.*, electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version. (Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995), Heb 11:6.

Lack of Humility

There is a category of Christian who believes they have a “spiritual authority” to assign, command, and declare status in Christ’s name. Cult type practices such as “name it and claim it” and “word of faith” erroneously teach that is bound to grant any request we make of him because he are his children. Take the following example of perverted Scripture passages:

And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do *it*. If ye love me, keep my commandments.³⁴

The immediate context makes it clear that the believing disciple should ask for what will glorify to the Heavenly Father. This verse is followed by the statement, “if ye love me keep my commandments”. Even if God were obligated to give us whatever we ask, he would only be obligated to grant it based on it glorifying himself, and then only for those who are obedient to his son. However, John clears up this matter sufficiently when he states, “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.”³⁵ Herein we find the authority for answering our prayers is based in God’s will not merely our desires.

What provokes a mortal man to believe we has the power to compel, manipulate, or persuade the sovereign Lord to grant his requests in opposition to his will? It is arrogance and pride of the highest order to name, claim, or declare anything from, or, in the name God which we first do not have a directive from Him. Again, our directives come initially from Scripture and then are empowered by the Holy Spirit based on diligent prayer – with the stipulation that it is God’s will that our desires are granted.

The divine authority of Scripture is a fact and an essential belief which we must accept and declare. Without divine authority of Scripture there is no justification for faith, holiness, discipleship, evangelism, or eternal consequences. Believers cannot find assurance in a word which does not carry the authority to deliver on its promises. They cannot rightly defend a faith which has no authority to support it. We must deliver the proud, weak, and ignorant from the claws of those who would distort, pervert, or undermine the divine authority of Scripture.

³⁴ *The Holy Bible: King James Version.*, electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version. (Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995), Jn 14:13–15.

³⁵ *The Holy Bible: King James Version.*, electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version. (Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995), 1 Jn 5:14.