

Principles Of The Faith- 1

The Characteristics of the Word

The Doctrine Of The Word of God (p. 47-51)

- ▶ The Word of God As A Person: Jesus Christ
- ▶ The Word of God As Speech by God:
 - God Decrees (to angels, creation)
 - God's Words of Personal Address (to people, nations etc)
 - God's Word As Speech Through Human Lips (prophets)
 - God's Word Through Written Form: The Bible
- ▶ Our focus will be on God's Word through written form – the Bible

The Canon of Scripture (p. 54-72)

- ▶ **The canon of Scripture is the list of all the books that belong in the Bible**
- ▶ Canon = standard or rule
- ▶ It is very important because we need to know which "words" are the words from God.
- ▶ Marcion – reduced the canon to Luke's gospel plus the works of Paul
- ▶ Council of Trent (Catholic) tried to add the Apocrypha
- ▶ Modern liberal theologians try to add in the Gnostic gospels such as the Gospel of Thomas
- ▶ F.F. Bruce *The Canon of Scripture*
- ▶ Josh McDowell *Evidence That Demands a Verdict - Vol. 2*

Old Testament Books

- ▶ Started with the Ten Commandments 'written by the finger of God'
- ▶ Moses then writes Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy recording God's words and deeds.
- ▶ Over time Scriptures added to by Joshua, Samuel, the prophets, Ezra the scribe etc.
- ▶ By the time of Jesus it was agreed that the last inspired writings ended with Malachi in 435 BC last books were Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi
- ▶ Jews agreed on this current list by Jesus day (Josephus) and certainly by 100AD
- ▶ Copied exceedingly carefully by the Masoretic scribes

New Testament Books

- ▶ Authored by the apostles or by those close to the apostles (e.g. Hebrews)
- ▶ Widely used by the Church in both East and West
- ▶ Profitable for life and doctrine: good outcomes
- ▶ Consistent with the life and teachings of Christ
- ▶ Christ is the final statement (Hebrews 1:1-3)
- ▶ Smaller books controversial: 2 John, 3 John, 2 Peter, Jude
- ▶ Revelation also controversial
- ▶ Current list agreed on substantially by 150AD and agreed fully by 367 AD
- ▶ Over 10,000 NT manuscripts exist enabling cross-checking, and there is a very high degree of consistency <1% of the NT is in dispute even to the slightest degree and no major doctrine is affected by such a dispute over the text.

The Apocrypha etc.

- ▶ There are many books that were not included in the OT or NT canon the major ones were: 1 & 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, the rest of Esther, the Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus (not the same as Ecclesiastes), Baruch (including the epistle of Jeremiah), the song of the Three Holy Children, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, the Prayer of Manasseh and 1 & 2 Maccabees.
- ▶ Mostly written between 400BC to 100 BC
- ▶ Interesting historically and of some value but definitely NOT Scripture
- ▶ Not included in any of the Jewish or early Christian lists of inspired books

Why The Apocrypha Were Not Accepted (p. 59)

- ▶ They do not claim for themselves the same kind of authority as the OT writings
- ▶ They were not regarded as God's words by the Jewish people from whom they originated
- ▶ They were not considered as Scripture by Jesus or any of the authors of the NT
- ▶ They contain teachings inconsistent with the rest of the NT

How Do We Know We Have The Right Books?

- ▶ The faithfulness of God in authoring, preserving His Scriptures and in guiding His Church to select correctly.
- ▶ The experience of the Church over time
- ▶ There are no strong candidates for inclusion
- ▶ There are no strong candidates for exclusion
- ▶ The most controversial books: Esther, Song of Solomon, 2 & 3 John, 2 Peter, James, Jude, Revelation and Hebrews do not contain any false doctrine harmful to the Church and no major evangelical theologian wishes to exclude any of them
- ▶ Apparent contradictions are resolved by studying the culture, use of language, symbolism, metaphor etc.

Authority

- ▶ **The authority of Scripture means that all words in Scripture are God's Words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.**
- ▶ Please note that "Scripture interprets Scripture" and disobeying some OT command that has been fulfilled e.g. the Sabbath is not disobeying God now (though it would have been in OT times)

All Words = God's Words

- ▶ This is what the Bible claims for itself 2 Tim 3:16,17
- ▶ We are convinced of the Bible's claims to be God's Words as we read the Bible (the inner witness of the Spirit)
- ▶ The Bible changes people as no other book does and therefore has a power for good that is beyond human words (the witness of millions of changed lives)
- ▶ The Bible is self-attesting, other evidence is useful (e.g. archaeology) but is not finally convincing
- ▶ The seared conscience cannot understand Scripture, you cannot prove the authority of Scripture to someone without the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14)

God's Words Are True

- ▶ God cannot lie or speak falsely
- ▶ Therefore all words in Scripture are completely true and without error in any part
- ▶ God's words are the ultimate standard of truth
- ▶ Written Scripture is our final authority
- ▶ If you say "I judge the Bible to be wrong" what do you have that is better than it that can we replace it with?
- ▶ All human efforts to replace the Bible with another book/s or with experience or with human reason have resulted in spiritual tragedy.

Other Books vs The Bible

- ▶ It is possible to attempt to replace the conviction of the Holy Spirit with numerous teachers accumulated to tickle our itching ears (and shelves of their books)! 2 Tim 4:1-4
- ▶ The library can replace the Lord
- ▶ Our primary source of theology should be meditation on Scripture under the anointing of the Holy Spirit!
- ▶ Books can help us but they must be books that point us in the direction of Jesus and the Bible
- ▶ We do not think and write and teach to please men (or other scholars) but to please God! (Galatians 1:10)

The Clarity of Scripture - 1

- ▶ The Scripture is clear to the obedient believer who listens to the voice of the Holy Spirit in their conscience. (John 7:17, 14:26, 1 John 2:20,27)
- ▶ No special teacher or interpreter is required. (Heb 8:11)
- ▶ Difficult to understand does not equal impossible to understand
- ▶ ***The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God's help and being willing to follow it.***



The Clarity of Scripture - 2

- ▶ The Bible affirms the clarity of Scripture
- ▶ Certain moral and spiritual qualities are required to understand Scripture e.g. being born-again, having the Holy Spirit, seeking to be obedient and live a holy life (not rebellious), and accepting Christ as the Key and the final authority.
- ▶ There are different levels of spiritual understanding – babes, mature, carnal, spiritual, teachers etc. Clarity improves with maturity.
- ▶ Understanding is shown by real living faith, obedience, fruitfulness, turning away from evil and making progress towards being in the image of God.



Misunderstanding Scripture

- ▶ Sin
- ▶ Lack of the Holy Spirit
- ▶ Rebelliousness and Lawlessness
- ▶ Trying to affirm things that Scripture does not say
- ▶ Denying things that Scripture does say
- ▶ Misunderstanding or misconstruing what the Bible says
- ▶ Faith = believing what God says
- ▶ Doubt = being skeptical about what God says
- ▶ Unbelief = refusing to believe what God says
- ▶ Presumption = inventing “new” things God “has said”
- ▶ Rebellion = doing the opposite of what God says



The Role of Teachers and Scholars

- ▶ Helping us to interpret the Bible correctly (translation, bible aids, hermeneutics and exegesis)
- ▶ Teaching what scripture means to the congregation and explaining it so that all can understand (as Ezra did)
- ▶ Defending the Bible from attack (apologetics)
- ▶ Helping us to see how to apply the Bible in new life and ministry situations (exposition and pastoral application)
- ▶ Researching new areas of the faith (e.g theology of technology, medical ethics etc)



The Necessity of Scripture

- ▶ ***The necessity of Scripture means that the Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God's will but it is not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God's character and moral laws.***
- ▶ God's existence and character are made plain from Creation – this is called General Revelation
- ▶ Faith requires a “word” from God to believe in.
- ▶ We cannot know about Jesus Christ or His salvation without hearing the Scriptures which reveal Him (e.g the Ethiopian eunuch who needed the Scriptures explained)
- ▶ Doing God's will involves knowing God's commandments, which of course are fully found only in the Bible.
- ▶ The Scriptures were the main equipment Timothy was to use in ministry! Ministry is impossible unless we know the Bible and are able to accurately divide the word of truth!

Can't We All Just Be Like Abraham?

- ▶ Abraham believed God but did not have any Bible.
- ▶ God spoke directly to Abraham's conscience through dreams and visions and covenants.
- ▶ Of course we all should have active, Spirit-filled consciences that believe what God has said.
- ▶ But that does not mean we can just throw the Bible out!
- ▶ Even Jesus, who had great faith and a pure conscience, read the Bible, memorized the Bible, used the Bible and taught from the Bible.
- ▶ If the Bible was vitally important for Jesus and the apostles and the prophets it should also be important for us! If Jesus saw the Scriptures as necessary – then they are!

Practical Implications - 1

1. We can search the Scriptures with the confidence that we will find all that God has said on a particular topic and that we will find all that we require to grow in God.
2. We are to add nothing to Scripture or to consider any other thing as equal to Scripture either ancient writings or modern revelations or personal experiences.
3. God does not require us to believe anything about Himself or His redemptive work that is not found in Scripture or which can be deduced in a fairly straightforward way from Scripture.

Practical Applications - 2

- ▶ 4. Nothing is sin that is not forbidden by Scripture either explicitly or by implication.
- ▶ 5. Nothing is required of us by God that is not commanded in Scripture either explicitly or by implication
- ▶ 6. In our doctrinal and ethical teaching we should emphasize what Scripture emphasizes and be content with what God has told us in Scripture.