

BIBLE TRUTHS EXPLAINED

What the Bible Teaches About

THE DIVINE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

Revised Edition, 2026

GORDON LYONS

ESV Edition

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Bible Truths Explained

The Divine Inspiration of The Bible

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The Divine Inspiration of The Bible

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PART 1

Synopsis: The Divine Inspiration of The Bible

The Bible is completely inspired (God-breathed). This means that it is entirely or absolutely inspired. From Genesis to Revelation, every part of the sacred Scriptures is *God-breathed*. In its original form and languages, (Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic) God transmitted his words (or his revealed will) to selected godly men. The Lord did this by the direct operation, guidance, and inspiration of his Holy Spirit. The Bible is not in any sense the expression of man's mind, will or thoughts. Rather, it is the revelation to humanity of God's mind and will. The Bible includes and teaches everything that is necessary for salvation; for assured hope for the future, and for godly daily living. Among the principal matters revealed in God's Word are the subjects of Creation, Providence, and Redemption (Salvation). The Bible is inspired, authoritative, and infallible in all matters of which it speaks, including matters of doctrine, principle, morals, practice, history, geography and science. The doctrine of *plenary* or *complete* inspiration stands opposed to the doctrine of *partial* or *limited* inspiration.

The Rule of Faith

The Bible is the Word of God. God's Word consists of 66 books. Thirty-nine of these books are located in the Old Testament, and twenty-seven in the New Testament. The Bible is the only infallible rule or standard of faith and practice. There is no other valid source of information pointing to eternal salvation or faith in God. Nor is there any other valid and authoritative source of information that reveals God's will and purposes for humanity in particular, and for God's creation in general.

That the Bible is the only infallible rule of faith and practice implies belief in the following essential truths:

1. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (the Bible) is the inspired Word of God.
2. These Scriptures can never fail, and they can never change.
3. They are of divine authority for faith and practice.
4. Regarding doctrine, teaching or fact, the Scriptures cannot err or be mistaken.

The Holy Scriptures, or the Holy Bible, constitutes the entire revealed will of God for mankind. God designed his written revelation to be the only standard of faith and practice for the church. Sometimes, we refer to this standard as the *Rule of Faith* or the *Analogy of Faith*.

Using the ordinary means of grace,¹ and with the aid of the Holy Spirit, God's people may understand, clearly and sufficiently, the teaching of the Bible for themselves. No other 'infallible' or 'authoritative' interpreter is required to explain the meaning of God's Holy Word.²

¹ 'The ordinary means of grace' includes breaking of bread, prayer, reading of the Word, and preaching and teaching of the Word.

² Above section based on C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1., [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977 reprint] p. 152

This, however, does not preclude the exposition of God's Word by appropriately gifted and Spirit-led individuals, such as pastors and teachers. Nor does it preclude the use of Bible study aids or commentaries to assist in the understanding of God's Word. However, we must remember that no human teacher or pastor, and no book or other aid is infallible (or inerrant). Only the Bible itself is infallible or incapable of error.

We must always rely, therefore, on the Holy Spirit to grant us discernment to distinguish truth from error, and to keep us in the right way. We must not depend, however, on the opinions of human beings when we should be depending on the clear teaching of God's Word, and should be adapting our lives to the pattern of that Word.

Scripture References (ESV)

The Divine Inspiration of The Bible

The following Scriptures illustrate that the Bible is literally the Word of God:

1 Thessalonians 2:13

¹³And 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.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

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 competent, equipped for every good work.

2 Peter 1:3-4

³His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises,³ so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

Meaning of Divine Inspiration

The Bible is the revelation of God's will to mankind. God gave this revelation by the direct guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Inspiration may be summarised as follows:

- *Inspiration* is an act of the Holy Spirit whereby he conveys divine truths to the minds of selected servants of God. The Holy Spirit thus inspired the writers of the sacred Scriptures, preserving them from errors in teaching. While inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, these holy *prophets* and *apostles* taught, preached and wrote the express words of God. Therefore, the Bible is the infallible Word of God. ⁴

³ ...*very great promises*: All these promises are found only in God's Word—the Bible.

⁴ Above section based on C. Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 155

Many Writers—One Author

As we noted earlier, the Bible consists of sixty-six books, thirty-nine of which are contained in the Old Testament, and twenty-seven in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit inspired equally and entirely all sixty-six books. This is known as the doctrine of plenary or complete inspiration.

The Bible is the whole revealed will of God, insofar as he makes known his purposes to and for the human race. This revelation took place gradually over a period of several thousand years. The revelation of God's Word to his own people in particular, and to humanity in general, was written down faithfully and inerrantly by different writers. These inspired writers lived in different ages, and under a variety of different circumstances. Yet, for all these differences, the various books of the Bible form a fully integrated and coherent whole. From beginning to end, God's Word teaches the same moral, spiritual and eternal truths.

The reason for this consistency in teaching is that, although the Bible had many *writers*, it had only one true *Author*. This Author was God himself—acting through his Holy Spirit. Therefore, *in its original manuscripts (autographs)*, the Bible was preserved completely free from error, because the Holy Spirit had unerringly guided the human writers.

The Holy Spirit inspired certain godly men, such as the LORD's holy prophets, to record divine truths. God's Spirit, however, did not use these individuals in a mechanical fashion, as though they were merely machines. The Holy Spirit did not override or suspend their rational, intellectual or other natural faculties or abilities. On the contrary, the Spirit of God made full use of these godly men's natural abilities, while at the same time preserving them from error in what they wrote or taught whenever they acted in the name of the LORD⁵ and by his express command. Thus, frequently, the prophets would begin their teaching or pronouncements with the expression, '*Thus says the LORD...*' or a similar phrase indicating that what they were about to say were the very words of Almighty God. For this reason, to reject the words of God's inspired and holy prophets was to reject the Word of God itself. The same was true concerning the writings and teachings of the New Testament apostles.

Inspiration preserved these writers from *errors in teaching*, and in writing down God's Word. It did not preserve them, however, from *errors in personal conduct*. Of itself, inspiration does not sanctify a person or make him perfectly holy. For example, the Spirit of God inspired David to write many of the Psalms. David, however, tarnished his personal life with some very grievous sins. Similarly, the Holy Spirit inspired the apostle Peter to write two epistles of the New Testament. Peter's conduct, however, was not always above reproach. Nevertheless, inspiration of the Holy Spirit guaranteed that men's sins and failures would not affect the truth of God's Word in any way.⁶ Human beings can fail or err, but God and his Word can never fail or err.

⁵ *LORD*: In the Old Testament, the word 'LORD' is used as a substitute for the personal name of God, 'YHWH' (or 'YaHWeH'). Jewish priests, scribes and the people in general considered God's personal name too sacred to pronounce or commit to writing. So, when translating to English from the Hebrew manuscripts, the translators used the word 'Lord' or 'LORD' as a substitute for God's personal name. 'YHWH' is related to the expression that the Lord God uses concerning himself in Exodus: 'I AM' or 'I AM WHO I AM'. (Exodus 3:14). The same expression, 'I AM...', is used also by the Lord Jesus in the New Testament.

⁶ *The text in the main section above is based on C. Hodge, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 155-157,166*

Scripture References (ESV)*Many Writers—One Author*

The following examples from God's Word show us that the real Author of that Word was God himself. Thus, it is written:

Exodus 20:1

¹ And God spoke all these words... [*i.e. the Ten Commandments*]

Exodus 31:18

¹⁸ When the LORD finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant law, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.

Zechariah 7:7a

^{7a} Are these not the words the LORD proclaimed through the earlier prophets...?

2 Timothy 3:16

¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

Hebrews 1:1-2a

¹ In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ^{2a} but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son...

PART 2

Inspired Men were God's Instruments

The men whom the Holy Spirit inspired to write down God's words were God's chosen instruments or messengers. The words they recorded and later proclaimed were to be received, not as the words of men, but as they were in truth—the words of God.

In the past, those who *heard* the voice of the prophets or apostles were hearing the voice of God speaking through these holy servants by his Spirit. Similarly, today, those who *read* the Word of God are hearing the voice of God speaking through that Word by his Spirit. To this end, the Scripture says:

1 Thessalonians 2:13

¹³And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe.

Those who hear God's Word, hear God. Those who refuse to hear and obey God's Word, refuse to hear and obey God.⁷ Thus, the Lord Jesus said:

Matthew 10:40

⁴⁰"Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.

The Lord Jesus was the incarnate Word. (John 1:1,14,18) Again, Jesus said:

John 12:47-48

⁴⁷"If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. ⁴⁸There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day.

Again, concerning the fact that men were inspired of God to write the words of God, the apostle Peter says:

2 Peter 1:19-21

¹⁹We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. ²¹For prophecy

⁷ Above section based on C. Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 161

never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Prophecy—i.e., what a prophet of God said—was not human, but divine. It was not the prophet's own interpretation of the mind and will of God. The prophet spoke as the organ of the Holy Spirit. The voice of the prophet expressed the voice of God.⁸ Those, therefore, who refused to hear and heed the words of the prophet, were in fact refusing to hear and heed the voice of God. Those who accepted and obeyed the prophet's message accepted and obeyed the word of God, and received the blessing of the Lord.

Scripture References (ESV)*Inspired Men were God's Instruments*

The following Scriptures demonstrate that the prophets were not expressing their own thoughts or ideas, but the revealed mind, will and purposes of God:

Exodus 34:27

²⁷And the Lord said to Moses, "Write these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel."

Isaiah 8:19-20

¹⁹And when they say to you, "Enquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter," should not a people enquire of their God? Should they enquire of the dead on behalf of the living? ²⁰To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.

Jeremiah 23:22

²²But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds.

Jeremiah 23:28-29

²⁸Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares the Lord. ²⁹Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? (see vv.13-32)

Jeremiah 23:36

³⁶But 'the burden of the Lord' you shall mention no more, for the burden is every man's own word, and you pervert the words of the living God, the Lord of hosts, our God. (see vv.33-40)

⁸ This paragraph based on C. Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 159

Ezekiel 2:7

⁷ And you shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear, for they are a rebellious house.

Ezekiel 3:16-18

¹⁶ And at the end of seven days, the word of the Lord came to me: ¹⁷ "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. ¹⁸ If I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die', and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. (see vv.19-21)

Ezekiel 3:27

²⁷ But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.' He who will hear, let him hear; and he who will refuse to hear, let him refuse, for they are a rebellious house.

1 Corinthians 1:18

¹⁸ For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:21

²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. (see vv.17-25)

1 Corinthians 2:13

¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. (see vv.1-16)

Inspiration and Infallibility

Since the Bible is fully inspired of God, it is infallible; i.e., it is incapable of failure or error regarding any matter of which it speaks. The infallibility and divine authority of the Scriptures is due to the fact

that they are the express words of God. Moreover, they are the express words of God because they were given by inspiration of God's Holy Spirit.⁹

As we have said, the Bible is infallible regarding every matter of which it speaks. However, while God's Word is wholly true and accurate, we must correctly interpret and understand the Bible's teaching. We must compare each verse or passage with the surrounding context, and with other related passages. We should never extract or isolate an individual verse from its immediate context, in order to support a particular doctrine or point of view. To do so would be to misquote and misapply the Word of God.

We must compare each passage of Scripture, and ensure that it agrees with other related passages of Scripture. Sometimes, we refer to this procedure as the *analogy of faith* or the *analogy of Scripture*. If there is an apparent contradiction, then it is likely that we have misinterpreted or misunderstood one or more passages. Again, we must make some allowance for the language of everyday speech or customary usage. Many everyday expressions should not necessarily be understood literally. (See below on *Language of Customary Usage*.)

Scripture References (ESV)

Inspiration and Infallibility

The following passages illustrate the total trustworthiness, and infallible nature, of God's Word:

Proverbs 30:5-6

- ⁵ Every word of God proves true;
he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.
⁶ Do not add to his words,
lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar. (Cf. Ps. 18:30)

Isaiah 40:8

- ⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades,
but the word of our God will stand for ever.

Jeremiah 1:9

- ⁹ Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said to me,
"Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. (see vv.4-12)

Matthew 24:35

- ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

⁹ This paragraph based on C. Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 153

Luke 24:25-27

²⁵ And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (see also vv.44-47)

Luke 24:32

³² They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?”

John 6:63

⁶³ It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

1 Thessalonians 2:13

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.

Hebrews 12:25

²⁵ See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.

1 Peter 1:23-25

²³ since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; ²⁴ for

“All flesh is like grass
and all its glory like the flower of grass.

The grass withers,
and the flower falls,

²⁵ but the word of the Lord remains for ever.” {Isaiah 40:6-8}

And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

1 Peter 4:11

¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in

everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Inspiration Extends to All Parts of Scripture

The Bible is inspired, equally and entirely, in all its parts (plenary or complete inspiration). Inspiration is not confined to moral and spiritual truths. It extends equally to all statements of fact. This includes doctrinal, practical, scientific, historical and geographical statements. All alike are the inspired Word of God.

When correctly interpreted (i.e., as God intended his truth to be understood), every statement and claim of the Bible must be accepted as true and accurate. Inspiration is not confined to those facts that are more obviously important, or which are involved in matters of doctrine. Inspiration and infallibility extends to everything that the sacred writers assert to be true.

Christ and his apostles make no distinction as to the authority of the Law, the Prophets the Psalms or any other canonical writings. They quote the Pentateuch (the five books of Moses), the historical books, the Psalms, the Prophets and other writings such as Proverbs, as all and equally the Word of God.

They refer to such infallible truths as the creation of man, Adam's apostasy (the fall of man), God's covenant with Abraham, and the giving of the Law upon Mount Sinai. These are examples of *doctrinal facts*, referred to by the Lord Jesus and by his apostles. Similarly, they refer to *historical facts* such as the Noahic Deluge or great flood, the dividing of the Red Sea, and the swallowing of Jonah by a great fish. The Lord Jesus and his apostles quote these incidents as literal truths. We must accept them as such.¹⁰

Scripture References (ESV)

Inspiration Extends to All Parts of Scripture

That the entire Bible is the inspired and authoritative Word of God is exemplified by the following Scriptures:

Matthew 5:17-19

¹⁷ "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. ¹⁸ For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Romans 15:4

⁴ For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

¹⁰ Above section based on C. Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, pp. 163-164

2 Timothy 3:16-17

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 competent, equipped for every good work.

2 Peter 1:21

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.

2 Peter 3:1-2

¹This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, ²that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles... (See also 2 Pet. 2:21)

2 Peter 3:5-7

⁵For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, ⁶and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. ⁷But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgement and destruction of the ungodly.

Revelation 22:18-19

¹⁸I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, ¹⁹and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. (See also Deut. 4:2; 12:32)

Equally Inspired, but not Equally Significant

The Holy Spirit of God equally inspires every book of the Bible. However, this does not mean that every book is of equal significance. As the Word of God, all canonical books without exception have *equal authority*. Not all books, however, are intended for teaching in doctrine or for instruction in righteousness. For instance, the books of Chronicles are the inspired, authoritative and historical records of the Hebrew people. These books provide us with important and invaluable genealogical and historical information. However, they do not provide the same degree of doctrinal, moral or practical instruction as, for example, the Gospels or the Epistles.

Scripture References (ESV)*Equally Inspired, but not Equally Significant*

The following examples illustrate the difference in relevance and significance between one class of Scripture record and another:

1 Timothy 1:3-4

³ As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, ⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.

Titus 2:1

¹ But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

Titus 3:9

⁹ But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. (See also 2 Tim. 2:23-24)

PART 3

No Contradictions

Some people suggest that the Bible is full of mistakes and contradictions. Such a claim reveals either a lack of awareness of God's truth, or a considerable degree of misunderstanding or spiritual blindness regarding the contents and truths of God's Word.

Correctly interpreted and understood, each part of the Bible harmonises fully with all the other parts. Minor discrepancies in the text can be accounted for by transmission errors during copying or translation of the existing ancient manuscripts. These minor errors, however, did not exist in the *original* manuscripts or *autographs*.

Scripture References (ESV)

No Contradictions

These Scriptures illustrate the unerring quality of God's Word in all its parts:

Proverbs 30:5a

^{5a} Every word of God proves true...

2 Peter 1:20-21

²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Minor Errors in Translation

In their *original* manuscripts (or *autographs*), and because of the Holy Spirit's inspiration, the Scriptures were totally free from error. Today, however, no *original* manuscripts remain. We are now dependent on many copies of the originals. It is from these copies that the different versions of the Bible have been translated.

These *translations* may contain some minor errors in the transcription of the text. However, in modern (true) translations of the Bible, these errors have been reduced to a minimum. The mistakes remaining relate principally to minor textual details, including the occasional difficulty in determining a precise name, location, or number.

There are, however, no errors in doctrine; i.e., in any matters relating to what we must believe or how we must live (faith and practice). Nor—where the original meaning and translation is preserved—are there any errors in matters that are of a practical, scientific, historical or geographical nature. In all these matters, the Bible is entirely accurate and wholly to be believed.

Translations and Paraphrases

Translations

Translations of the Bible try to maintain the closest possible literal accuracy of the text, insofar as linguistic idiom will allow. This category generally endeavours to provide as close as possible to a word-for-word rendering of the text (within the rules of grammatical construction). Differences in grammar and syntax between Hebrew and English, or Greek and English words and phrases, however, often requires the re-arrangement or partial re-arrangement of sentences. Usually, this is done with the greatest care, and only to preserve and reflect the true meaning of the text. Careful reconstruction of certain sentences helps to preserve the clarity and power of God's Word for the average reader.

A good translation of the Bible is the most accurate and most reliable for study purposes. For several centuries—until the latter part of the 1900's—the most popular translation of the Bible was the King James Version (or Authorised Version). This version remained the first choice of Christians for nearly four centuries.

However, despite the undeniable beauty of style and language of the King James Version, it does contain some textual discrepancies. Although these are relatively minor, a more modern translation is sometimes preferable for greater clarity and improved accuracy. (This is assuming one does not have access to copies of reliable Hebrew and Greek texts. Copies in the original languages should take precedence over any English or other translations.)

Caution

There are several translations available today that are neither reliable or accurate. These 'translations' distort the Word of God or add additional teachings to God's Word. Check with your pastor, church leader or a knowledgeable friend if necessary to ensure that you are using a reliable, trustworthy and accurate translation of the Bible.

Paraphrases

A paraphrase of the Bible endeavours to maintain overall accuracy of the text. However, the intention of this category is to provide a general thought-for-thought rendering of the text, rather than a more literal rendering.

This involves making some degree of alteration to a closely literal English rendering of the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek text. This departure from the original rendering, therefore, is more pronounced in a paraphrase than would be the case with a (true) translation of the Bible. Although, usually, the translators have made these changes with care, we should treat a paraphrase of the Bible with caution. In its place, a paraphrase can prove very valuable, and can make for easier reading of the text. Nevertheless, we must not consider a paraphrase of the Bible to be as literally accurate as a translation.

A paraphrase may prove useful for comparative or general reading purposes, or for providing basic instruction. Even then, however, it should be used with discretion, lest undue dependence should be placed upon this type of version. For serious study purposes, we should not depend on a paraphrase of the Bible to the same extent as a reliable translation.

Apocrypha is Not Inspired

Some versions of the Bible—notably, those versions used by members of the Roman Catholic faith—contain more than the recognised 66 books. This is because the RC translators have included various apocryphal writings in their versions. Among these apocryphal writings are 1 and 2 Esdras, The Wisdom of Solomon, and 1 and 2 Maccabees.

The Hebrew canon of the Holy Scriptures does not include any of the fifteen or so books of the Apocrypha. All—except 2 Esdras—are present however in copies of the Greek version of the Old Testament known as the *Greek Septuagint*, and usually abbreviated, LXX. Because of their exclusion from the Hebrew canon, most conservative Christians reject the apocryphal books. They do not consider them being in any way inspired or God-breathed. Since they form no part of the canon of sacred Scripture, these books have no authority in any matter of faith or practice.

Scripture References (ESV)

Apocrypha is Not Inspired

The following examples show how the Lord Jesus quoted from, or referred to, the Old Testament Scriptures, as accepted among the Jewish people of his day. At no time did the Lord's quotations from, or allusions to, the Old Testament include a reference to any of the Apocryphal books. Thus, it is written:

Luke 24:24-27

²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.” ²⁵And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” ²⁷**And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets**, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (emphasis added)

Luke 24:44-45

⁴⁴Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me **in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms** must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, (emphasis added)

Romans 3:1-2

¹Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? ²Much in every way. To begin with, **the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.** (emphasis added)

Whenever the Lord Jesus quoted the Scriptures of the Old Testament, he did so only from the recognised Jewish scrolls: The Law ('Torah'), the Prophets, and the Psalms. Also included would have been the category known as the 'Writings', such as Proverbs and Job.

In each case, the Scriptures referred to was the Word of God (or *the Oracles of God*) as understood and commonly accepted by the Jewish people; as faithfully preserved by a succession of Jewish scholars, and as daily used in the synagogue and temple.

The Old Testament Scriptures (or *Scrolls*) were referred to collectively under three heads: the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms. Neither the Jewish leaders or people, nor the Lord Jesus, recognised or accepted any other books or scrolls as part of the canon of sacred Scripture. They may have used certain extra-biblical writings for reference purposes alone, but they never considered these writings to be inspired or God-breathed parts of the sacred Scriptures.

PART 4

The Purpose of The Bible

The Bible Reveals God to All Humanity

The Bible is the Word of God to all people worldwide. What the Bible says is what God says. The purpose of the Bible is to reveal to mankind everything he needs to know about God and about his relationship to God. In his fallen and unregenerate condition, mankind remains alienated from God by sin, and is abiding under God's righteous and holy wrath. (John 3:36)

The Bible also reveals to men and women God's one and only way of salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. By the operation of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God penetrates to the deepest recesses of a person's soul. The Spirit and the Word powerfully convince men and women of their sin. Both the Spirit and the Word then convict individuals of their need of redemption. In the case of the elect, the Spirit of God draws these men and women irresistibly—yet *freely and willingly*—to faith in Christ. Thus, the Scripture says:

Hebrews 4:12-13

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. ¹³And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

John 16:8

⁸And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgement: (See also vv.9-11)

John 5:24

²⁴Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgement, but has passed from death to life.

John 6:37

³⁷All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

John 6:44-45

⁴⁴No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. ⁴⁵It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— (See also Isa. 54:13; Jer. 31:33-34)

John 6:64-66

⁶⁴But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) ⁶⁵And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”

⁶⁶After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. (See vv.35-71)

However, if people do not heed the message of the living Word of God, then they have no hope of salvation:

John 5:39-40

³⁹You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, ⁴⁰yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

John 6:66

⁶⁶After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

1 John 5:9-12

⁹If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. ¹⁰Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. ¹¹And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Scripture References (ESV)

The Bible Reveals God to All Humanity

The following passages illustrate that God reveals his will and ways to all humankind in the Bible alone. These passages also reveal that a person cannot understand fully or savingly the truth of the Bible unless God’s Holy Spirit illuminates his mind and regenerates his soul. Thus, it is written in the Word of God:

Psalms 119:18

Open my eyes, that I may behold
wondrous things out of your law.

Psalms 119:97-100

- ⁹⁷ Oh how I love your law!
It is my meditation all the day.
- ⁹⁸ Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies,
for it is ever with me.
- ⁹⁹ I have more understanding than all my teachers,
for your testimonies are my meditation.
- ¹⁰⁰ I understand more than the aged,
for I keep your precepts.

Psalms 119:105

- ¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.

Psalms 119:130

- ¹³⁰ The unfolding of your words gives light;
it imparts understanding to the simple.

Isaiah 48:17-18

- ¹⁷ Thus says the Lord,
your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:
“I am the Lord your God,
who teaches you to profit,
who leads you in the way you should go.
- ¹⁸ Oh that you had paid attention to my commandments!
Then your peace would have been like a river,
and your righteousness like the waves of the sea;

Isaiah 48:22

- ²² “There is no peace,” says the Lord, “for the wicked.”

Isaiah 55:6-7

- ⁶ “Seek the Lord while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;
⁷ let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. (See vv.8-9)

Isaiah 55:10-11

- ¹⁰ “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,
¹¹ 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. (See vv.12-13)

Luke 24:32

- ³² They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he
talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?”

Luke 24:45

- ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,

John 20:31

- ³¹ but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the
Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Romans 1:16-17

- ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for
salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the
Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for
faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.” {Hab. 2:4} (see
vv.2-3)

Romans 10:17

- ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.
(See vv.1-21)

Romans 16:25-26

- ²⁵ Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and
the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the
mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶ but has now been
disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to
all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring
about the obedience of faith—

1 Corinthians 2:14

¹⁴The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

A Famine of Hearing God's Word

Proverbs 29:18

¹⁸Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.

Amos 8:11-12

¹¹"Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord God, "when I will send a famine on the land— not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.

¹²They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it. (See vv.13-14)

The Sufficiency of the Bible

The Bible is the full and sufficient revelation of God's will for all mankind. It addresses those who are lost, showing them the dreadful and never-ending penalty they must pay if they refuse to repent. In all his dealings with individuals, God is sovereign. God's sovereignty, however, does not absolve these individuals of their personal responsibility toward him, and toward his Word.

The Bible also addresses those who are seeking to know the Lord. In clear and unmistakable terms, the Holy Spirit reveals to them the one and only way of salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In addition, and in a special way, the Bible addresses those who belong to the Lord. In the pages of the Bible, the Holy Spirit reveals the ways and will of God for every individual believer, and for each believing family. No additional revelation is—or ever will be—necessary. In its 66 books, the canon of Scripture stands entire and complete. In all things relating to life and godliness, it is fully sufficient.

Thus, the Scripture says:

2 Peter 1:3-4

³His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. (See vv.5-12)

Scripture References (ESV)*The Sufficiency of the Bible*

The Word of God is fully sufficient. No additional sacred books will ever be necessary, and God has forbidden anyone from either adding to or subtracting from his holy Word. Thus, God's Word says:

Deuteronomy 4:1-2

¹ "And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you. ² You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you. (See vv.3-14)

Deuteronomy 6:4-7

⁴ "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. (See vv.13-25)

Joshua 1:8

⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. (See vv.6-9,16-18)

Luke 16:29-31

²⁹ But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' ³⁰ And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' ³¹ He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'"

John 5:39-40

³⁹ You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

Galatians 1:8-9

⁸But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. (See vv.6-7)

2 Timothy 3:14-15

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. (See vv.16,17)

Hebrews 4:12

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. (See v.13)

Revelation 22:18-19

¹⁸I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, ¹⁹and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

PART 5

Limits of Biblical Revelation

The Bible reveals everything that is necessary to salvation, and to the belief and practice of our faith. However, it does not reveal everything that there is to know about God, or about the universe that he created. There is much about the infinite God that our finite minds could never begin to comprehend. Similarly, there is much about the created universe that the Bible does not attempt to explain. These details are not relevant to the plan of salvation, or to holiness of life.

Concerning the material universe, the Bible tells us that God created all things by his word or command. The Bible also tells us that God's almighty and sovereign power is, at this time, preserving everything in the entire universe.

The Bible is not a science textbook; but no science textbook has the authority to contradict the clear teaching of God's Word. Where the Bible speaks on scientific matters, God's Word is totally accurate and wholly to be believed. Here again the Bible is infallible. We should take care, however, to ensure that we *correctly interpret* and understand God's Word.

Scripture References (ESV)

Limits of Biblical Revelation

The following Scriptures indicate that God has not revealed certain matters to mankind, although he has revealed everything that is relevant to salvation and godly conduct:

Deuteronomy 29:29

²⁹ "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Mark 13:32

³² "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Acts 1:6-7

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.

God's Revelation Regarding Creation

The Bible is quite explicit about both the origins of the created universe (including this planet) and about the creation of mankind. Thus, God's Word expressly says:

Genesis 1:1-3

- ¹ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.
- ³ And God said, "Let there be light", and there was light. (See vv.4-31)

Genesis 2:1

- ¹ Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. (See vv.2,3)

Genesis 1:26-28

- ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."
- ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
- ²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Genesis 2:5-7

- ⁵ When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, ⁶ and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground— ⁷ then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

Nehemiah 9:6

- ⁶ "You are the Lord, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you.

John 1:3

³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. (See vv.1-2,10)

Colossians 1:16-17

¹⁶For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Man's Knowledge is Finite

People may deny God's involvement in either the creation of the world, or the creation of man (Adam and Eve). However, the Genesis account of creation is the testimony of the living, eternal and infinite God. God's Word is authoritative, infallible, and final. Therefore, we must believe what God says in his Word about his creation. It would be utterly unreasonable and irrational to doubt or question the express teaching of God's Word.

We must also remember that man's opinions and theories concerning the creation of the universe are merely expressions of the sum of acquired human knowledge (empirical knowledge). To this acquired knowledge, we may add human—and therefore potentially fallible—interpretations of specific, but limited, data. However, without repeatable evidence, these theories do not, and cannot, amount to scientifically verifiable facts.

As believers, we have no complaint with established or proven scientific *facts*. Nothing can be discovered through scientific research and enquiry, and established as fact, that will be contradicted by the Word of God. Where they overlap, the truths of God's Word, and scientifically established and proven facts, agree completely. For, directly or indirectly, scientific *facts* derive their data and proofs from God's revelation in nature; e.g., from information provided by the study of faunae, florum and fossils.

However, concerning the different *theories* or *hypotheses* proposed from time to time by various schools of learning—including some disciplines of 'science'—this is another matter. Clearly, a theory or hypothesis is not an established and verifiable fact. To place more faith in the opinions and theories of man, therefore, than in the clear testimony of God's Word, is to fail to appreciate the finite nature of man's knowledge and understanding. If we truly believe in an all-powerful God, then we must believe that his infinite knowledge far exceeds the finite knowledge and understanding that humanity possesses concerning God and his creation. Mankind can discover only what God permits him to discover.

God's Revelation Regarding Preservation

God did not create the universe only to leave it to govern itself. By his almighty and sovereign hand, the Lord God controls everything that happens throughout the universe. Nothing in the universe is

outside his knowledge or control, and nothing can interfere with his power to preserve his own creation. The following Scriptures illustrate God's preserving power over his creation:

Job 10:8

⁸ Your hands fashioned and made me,
and now you have destroyed me altogether. (See vv.9-11)

Job 10:12

¹² You have granted me life and steadfast love,
and your care has preserved my spirit.

Job 12:10

¹⁰ In his hand is the life of every living thing
and the breath of all mankind.

Job 14:5

⁵ Since his days are determined,
and the number of his months is with you,
and you have appointed his limits that he cannot pass,
(See also Ps.139:16)

Job 34:14-15

¹⁴ If he should set his heart to it
and gather to himself his spirit and his breath,
¹⁵ all flesh would perish together,
and man would return to dust. (See v.20)

Job 12:15

¹⁵ If he withholds the waters, they dry up;
if he sends them out, they overwhelm the land.

Psalms 135:6-7

⁶ Whatever the Lord pleases, he does,
in heaven and on earth,
in the seas and all deeps.
⁷ He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth,
who makes lightnings for the rain
and brings forth the wind from his storehouses. (See also Deut. 28:12)

Matthew 6:26

²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? (See vv.25-34)

Matthew 10:29-30

²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. (See vv.26-30)

Language of Common or Customary Usage

When reading and considering the teaching of God's Word, there are places where it is appropriate and necessary to make due allowance for the language of customary or common usage. For instance, when the Bible speaks of the rising and setting of the sun, it is using an everyday form of speech. Thus, for example, the following Scripture says:

Psalms 113:3

³ From the rising of the sun to its setting,
the name of the Lord is to be praised!
(See also Mal. 1:11)

We know that the sun does not literally rise and set, but that the earth rotates around the sun. This gives the appearance of the sun rising and setting in relation to the earth.

Common linguistic idioms such as these must not be applied literally to make the Bible appear to teach something that is not factually correct. There are a number of places in the Word of God where parabolic, metaphorical or other forms of figurative language are used. An examination of the immediate context and the application of the analogy of Scripture (comparing one passage with other related passages) will help prevent misunderstanding or misinterpretation.

PART 6

The Supreme Authority of the Bible

Concerning his immortal soul, and his relationship to God, the Bible is the supremely authoritative source of instruction for all humanity. It is not just one source among many. The Bible is the *one and only* source of instruction given to us by the only true and living God. There is no other.

This supreme authority concerns not only what we must believe, but also how we must live (faith and practice). To this end, Charles Hodge wrote:

*Everything is right which they [the Scriptures] command, and everything is wrong which they condemn.*¹¹

On every matter concerning our faith, and on every matter relating to moral standards, we must fully believe and completely obey God's Word. The teachings of the Scriptures are not to be accepted or rejected as we please, or interpreted according to our own personal viewpoints on certain matters. We are required to accept, observe, and obey everything in the Word of God: Everything that is applicable to believers living by God's grace under the terms of the New Covenant.

The Moral Law Remains in Effect

It is a mistake to believe that the moral standards of the Old Testament are not applicable to Christians because they are not living under law but under grace. The whole Bible—Old and New Testaments—is the Word of God, and we must regard it as such. From this it follows that—unless they have been expressly fulfilled or revoked in the New Testament—the moral laws of the Old Testament still apply today.

We must not confuse the moral law, however, with the ceremonial laws, or with the laws of rituals and ordinances. When Christ died at Calvary and rose triumphantly three day later, he brought to a conclusion the OT ceremonial laws with all their statutes and ordinances. However, concerning the OT teaching as a whole, the Lord Jesus made it abundantly plain that he had not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfil them. Thus, the Scripture says:

Matthew 5:17-19

¹⁷ "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. ¹⁸ For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Christ did indeed fulfil all the requirements of God's law on our behalf. The Lord Jesus obeyed God's law perfectly and entirely for every one who would call upon his name. In addition, Jesus bore God's wrath and curse on our behalf. Consequently, God has justified us freely, fully and forever; i.e., he has declared us righteous in his sight. In forensic terms, God has acquitted us of all charges and cleared us

¹¹ C. Hodge, Princeton Sermons, [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1879, 1979 reprint] p. 289

of all guilt. We are not, therefore, under obligation to the law in any legal sense. For, in the legal sense, the law was our schoolmaster—our tutor, instructor or guardian—to make us aware of our sins. Since we could not keep it, the law could never save us. Indeed, its purpose was not to save us, but to condemn our sin, and to lead us to Christ—the only Saviour from sin’s dominion and penalty. Thus, the Scripture says:

Galatians 3:23-26

²³ Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. ²⁴ So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, ²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

However, we must not confuse the legal aspect of the law with the moral aspect, as is done in some circles. Christ satisfied all the legal and moral demands of the law. This, however, does not mean that we can now live without reference to God’s moral and spiritual standards. The moral law of God remains fully in force. The Ten Commandments and other moral laws and principles are still as binding on us now as they were in the days of Moses. They do not bind us, however, to a covenant of works, supposedly leading to eternal life. That was never the true purpose of God’s law. Rather, they bind us in the moral and spiritual sense. They oblige us to heed and obey the entire Word of God, out of love for God, and with a due regard for his unchanging and infallible Word.

Scripture References (ESV)

The Moral Law Remains in Effect

The following passages from God’s Word demonstrate the manner in which the moral law is to be observed. We should note that the primary requirement of God’s moral law is love:

Matthew 22:34-40

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵ And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” (Cf. Deut. 6:5; 10:12; Lev. 19:18,34)

John 14:15

¹⁵ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

John 14:21a

^{21a} Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me....”

John 14:23a

^{23a} Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word..."

John 14:24

²⁴ "Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me."

John 15:10

¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

John 15:12-14

¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you."

Romans 13:8-10

⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet", and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Cf. Exodus 20:13-15,17; Deut. 5:17-19,21; Lev. 19:18)

Galatians 5:13-14

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." (Cf. Lev. 19:18)

1 John 5:2-4

² By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. ³ For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

⁴ For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

Proof of the Validity of the Moral Law

Far from abolishing the moral law, the Lord Jesus expounded, clarified, and thereby intensified this law. We need only consider one example of Jesus' teaching to see this exemplified. Thus, the Lord says:

Matthew 5:27-28

²⁷ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' ²⁸ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (See vv.21-26; Exodus 20:14)

In thus expounding the seventh commandment, Jesus was making it abundantly clear that the sinful thought is just as blameworthy in the sight of God—and as polluting to the soul—as the sinful word, deed or attitude.

The moral law, therefore, remains in effect. If we fail to heed any of the instructions in God's Word—whether by our thoughts, words or deeds—this is wilful disobedience to the living God. God will not hold those guiltless who do not seek to obey his Word in full. If anyone refuses to heed the teaching of the Bible, he is treating the living God with contempt; for the Bible makes known God's standards for all people. Moreover, if in a court of law, contempt be a serious offence, how much more serious must it be to show contempt for God?

Scripture References (ESV)

Proof of the Validity of the Moral Law

The following Scriptures show the effect that God's Word, and his moral standards, ought to have on our lives:

James 1:21-25

²¹ Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵ But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

James 2:8-10

⁸ If you really fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself", you are doing well. ⁹ But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For

whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. (See vv.11-13; cf. v.9 with Lev. 19:15 below)

Leviticus 19:15

¹⁵ “You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbour.

Leviticus 19:16a

^{16a} You shall not go around as a slanderer [KJV, *talebearer*] among your people... (See vv.17-18)

James 4:11-12

¹¹ Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. ¹² There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbour?

PART 7

Matters of Conscience

If any matter is not explicitly taught as doctrine, or covered by a moral or spiritual guideline or principle of God's Word, then no-one can compel us to obey or observe that teaching or practice. Where nothing of a questionable or sinful nature is involved, then each believer has the freedom to treat such matters according to his or her own conscience. In the absence of Scriptural precept or principle, matters of conscience must be determined privately—before God—by each individual believer.

No one has the right to require us to obey or observe any unwritten or unscriptural tradition; i.e., any teaching or tradition that is not expressly recorded in the Word of God. Again, no one can impose on us the decisions or decrees of the visible church, or the resolutions of church committees, conferences, or any other collective bodies. If it cannot be shown to us from the Scriptures, no person has the authority to declare this or that matter to be right or wrong, true or false. We must not allow our consciences to be bound by the rules or opinions of men.

God's People bound by God's Word Alone.

If we would stand fast in our freedom in Christ Jesus, then we must adhere steadfastly to the principle that—in matters of religion and morals—the Scriptures alone have authority to bind the conscience.¹² In all these matters, *the people of God are bound by nothing but the Word of God.*

At times, of course, an individual believer may and should seek the advice of the leaders of his or her church. In such cases, the church leaders must restrict themselves to giving counsel based on the teaching and principles of God's Word. They must not attempt to impose their own personal convictions upon another believer. It is to his own Master that the believer stands or falls: and Christ is able to make him stand. Where, on some matters, the Scriptures are silent, we must not presume to speak with Biblical authority.

Scripture References (ESV)

Conscience Not Bound by Any Man

The following passages from God's Word demonstrate that no believer is at liberty to exalt himself above any other believer. These Scriptures also show that, in matters of indifference, each believer should act according to his conscience in the sight of God. No believer, however, should attempt to impose his own personal opinions or convictions upon his fellow-believers.

Thus, God's Word says:

Matthew 23:8-10

⁸ But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. ⁹ And call no man your father on earth, for you have one

¹² Above section based on C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1., [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977 reprint] p. 183

Father, who is in heaven. ¹⁰ Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. (See vv.1-12)

Acts 4:18-20

¹⁸ So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, ²⁰ for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." (See also Acts 5:29)

Galatians 5:1

¹ For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. (See vv.2-15)

Galatians 5:13-15

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

Colossians 2:16-17

¹⁶ Therefore let no one pass judgement on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. (See vv.18-23)

A Higher Law than Freedom of Conscience

We have noted the Christian's right to exercise freedom of conscience in all matters of indifference. Now, we take note of a higher principle of God's law. This principle says that we must love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength; and that we must love our neighbour as ourselves. If, however, we love our neighbour as ourselves, we would not wish to do anything that may hurt or harm our neighbour. Indeed, out of genuine concern for their welfare, we would avoid those things that we knew were offensive or objectionable to our neighbour. We would do this even if there were nothing intrinsically wrong or sinful with the action involved.

If, however, we would—or should—make such concessions to our neighbour, how much more should we make the same concessions to our own spiritual family; i.e., to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ? If the freedom to choose according to our conscience, meant we were doing something that offended our brother or sister in the Lord, are we then acting in love?

There are times when our right to choose must give way to another's spiritual and moral welfare. This involves the case of the weaker brother, which we will now consider.

The Weaker Brother

The apostle Paul recognised each individual believer's right to decide matters of indifference according to his conscience. However, the same apostle declared in several places that this right to decide according to conscience must not be the means of causing a weaker brother or sister to stumble or fall. If in doubt about the effects a particular action might have on a weaker believer, then the stronger brother or sister must not knowingly cause offence.

Apostolic Instructions

In the early days of the church, many of the believers were undecided about whether they should eat meat previously offered in sacrifice to idols. Some of the believers thought that the meat became polluted by being offered to these idols. Others, however, had no such problems about eating this meat, believing as they did that a non-existent entity (supposedly represented by an idol) could not pollute anything.

To avoid this matter from resolving itself into disputes and splits between believers, the early church wrote to the apostles at Jerusalem seeking their advice. The apostles considered the matter and wrote back as inspired by the Holy Spirit. Their reply is given below:

Acts 15:28-29

²⁸ "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: ²⁹ that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell." (See also Acts 15:19-20; Acts 21:25)

Food Offered to Idols

There was nothing intrinsically wrong with the meat offered in sacrifice to idols. The meat was of the finest quality. However, for the sake of the less mature or weaker saints in their midst, the apostles advised the churches to abstain from eating such food. This would ensure that a weaker brother or sister was not offended.

Such offence could be caused when the spiritually weaker person saw another believer eating meat known to have been offered to idols. Equally, a weaker believer could be offended if he were to see a 'more mature' believer eating such food at an idol's temple. In the latter case, the weaker believer might assume (mistakenly) that the stronger believer had been taking part in the sacrifices offered to idols. This was another very good reason why the apostles advised the people of God to keep away from such food.

Blood

In addition, the apostles advised God's people to abstain from blood. Drinking of blood was commonly associated with pagan rituals and sacrifices. More importantly, however, the Old Testament Scriptures expressly forbade such an act. Blood represented life. Indeed, the Scripture asserts that the life of the flesh is in the blood. (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11,14)

Strangled Animals

The apostles at Jerusalem also required the believers to abstain from the meat of strangled animals. This would avoid giving unnecessary offence to Jewish Christians. They believed that—in accordance

with Old Testament law—the animal had to be killed in a specific manner before they were at liberty to cook and eat it. The method used by Gentiles did not satisfy these requirements. For this reason, many Jewish Christian believers did not feel able to eat such meat. (Lev. 17:13; Deut. 12:16)

Sexual Immorality

The last requirement delivered by the apostles relates to sexual immorality. Like today, immorality was rife in the apostle Paul's day. It had even begun to make inroads into the church. However, God expressly forbids sexual relations of any kind outside of marriage. Therefore, no believer was to scandalise the church by committing sexual immorality. This would be a sin against the Lord. In addition, by defiling their bodies, they would be defiling God's temple since the body was the dwelling place of his Holy Spirit. Furthermore, by their evil example, they might not only deeply offend another believer but also entice him to sin against his own body and against the Lord. (1 Cor. 6:18; 7:2; 10:8; Eph. 5:3)

Love before Liberty

In matters of conscience and indifference, none of us is qualified to judge other believers for what they do. If that person is acting according to his conscience, and according to God's will for his life, then we cannot criticise him because we may not agree with his actions. One day, we will all answer to God for our actions, whether right or wrong. In the meantime, however, let us not put any stumbling block before those who believe they are doing right in the eyes of God.

Concerning matters of indifference and conscience, the apostle Paul writes:

Romans 14:4

⁴Who are you to pass judgement on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. (See vv.1-12)

Romans 14:13

¹³Therefore let us not pass judgement on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.

Romans 14:14-16

¹⁴I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. ¹⁵For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. ¹⁶So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. (See vv.17-18)

Romans 14:19-21

¹⁹So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

²⁰Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. ²¹It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.

Romans 14:22-23

²²The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgement on himself for what he approves. ²³But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. (See also Rom. 15:1-7; 1 Cor. 10:23 – 11:1)

Thus, we must observe that the Lord grants us liberty to exercise our conscience in all matters of indifference. However, this freedom of conscience should be subordinated to our love and concern for the moral and spiritual wellbeing of our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

PART 8

Obedience to Spiritual Leaders

God's Word requires that everyone submit to those whom he has set in authority over them. In the civil and legal realm, this includes civic rulers and governors together with judges, sheriffs, magistrates, and other officers of the law. In the moral and spiritual realm, it includes pastors, elders, and deacons. In this latter category, where the Holy Spirit has called and appointed these individuals to watch over the souls of God's people, they are responsible to God for feeding his flock, and for protecting that flock from false teaching. In consideration of these things, God's Word says:

Hebrews 13:17

¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

1 Peter 5:2-4

² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (See v.1)

The Holy Spirit Applies the Word

It is not the opinions of men upon which we must rely for a correct understanding of God's ways and will for our individual lives. Rather, it is the Holy Spirit of God. The Lord Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit to seal us unto God and also to teach us and guide us into all truth. Thus, the Scripture says:

John 14:26

²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

John 16:13-15

¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (See also 1 Cor. 2:6-16)

But how can a believer come to know all the truth of God, if he or she does not spend time prayerfully studying and meditating on the Word of God? How can the Holy Spirit guide a believer from God's Word, if he or she does not make regular use of the appointed means of grace? In this instance, the

means of grace are the public preaching and teaching of the Word of God, and the private daily searching of the Scriptures for ourselves. Thus, God's Word says:

Acts 2:42

⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Acts 17:11

¹¹ Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

1 Timothy 4:13

¹³ Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.

1 Timothy 4:16

¹⁶ Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

The Bible is the sole source of food for the believer's soul, and of light for his life. Each one of God's redeemed children needs to spend time listening to the teaching of God's Word. Each son or daughter of God also needs to study and meditate upon that Word, privately and prayerfully.

Deuteronomy 32:45-47

⁴⁵ And when Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel, ⁴⁶ he said to them, "Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law. ⁴⁷ For it is no empty word for you, but your very life, and by this word you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess."

Scripture References (ESV)

The Holy Spirit Applies the Word

The Holy Spirit is the one who imparts life to the soul through the reading of God's Word. It is by this means also that the Spirit of God carries out the ongoing work of sanctification. Apart from the spiritually energising work and illuminating power of God's Spirit, we would not be able to comprehend the significance of God's Word or understand its spiritual truths. Thus, we must seek to read the Word of God prayerfully—and this is essential—and with the guidance of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Concerning the essential work of the Holy Spirit in understanding and applying God's Word, the Scriptures say:

John 6:63-64

⁶³ It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ⁶⁴ But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.)

2 Corinthians 3:5-6

⁵ Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶ who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (See vv.1-18)

1 Corinthians 2:9-16

⁹ But, as it is written,

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined,
what God has prepared for those who love him”—

¹⁰ these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. ¹⁶ “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” {Isaiah 40:13} But we have the mind of Christ. (See vv.1-8)

Defending the Truth against False Teaching

We, who by God's grace *know* the truth, must hold steadfastly *to* the truth. Many people will attempt to discredit God's Word. Often, this is because they do not want God's Word to condemn their sinful deeds, or to remind them that they are living under God's wrath and will yet face his final judgment. Thus, we must hold fast to the truth. With much love and concern for the lost, we must present the truth to them in all its living power. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we must feed the unadulterated truth of God's Word to his own people. Only then will the church and people of God be properly equipped to grow in the faith, and to defend themselves against the enemy and against false teaching. For these and other reasons, God's Word says:

1 John 2:20

²⁰ But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. (See vv.18-25)

1 John 2:26-27

²⁶ I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. ²⁷ But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.

2 Timothy 2:14-18

¹⁴ Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. ¹⁵ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. ¹⁶ But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, ¹⁷ and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, ¹⁸ who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some.

2 John 1:9-11

⁹ Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰ If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, ¹¹ for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works. (See vv.7-8)

Epilogue

In studying these notes on the *Divine Inspiration of The Bible*, we have now completed our introductory study to the series, *Bible Truths Explained*. We have laid our foundation for these studies on God's eternal and infallible Word, the Bible. Each of the *Bible Truths Explained* topics that follow this introduction will consider one of the major Bible truths or doctrines.

This will include the Bible's teaching on such subjects as *the fall of man, sin, predestination, repentance, faith, regeneration, justification, sanctification*, and many more (although not necessarily in this order). We hope that you will follow these subsequent studies of these most precious and foundational truths, and that by so doing God will bless you richly through your prayerful and careful searching of his eternal living Word.

May God continue to bless you in your work and service for him, and may you yourselves be a great blessing to others as you seek to bring them into contact with the truths of God's Word.

Let us, then, depend on God, and on his Son, Jesus Christ. He will provide for our every need. Let us live by the Spirit; faithfully bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit. Then, we will experience the power of

the Lord in our lives; together with that sorrow or persecution to which the Lord has called us. To God be the glory for what he has done!

Jude 1:24-25

²⁴ Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God, our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and for ever. Amen.

