

Scripture's Truthfulness

BI: The Bible is not merely about theology. It's truth for life that should fill our minds, rule our hearts, and guide our feet.

It's good for us from time to time to go back to the basics and remind ourselves of the foundational truths that define us as Christians. That's why we are taking the time to do a brief study on the word of God. What could be more foundational to our lives as believers than the Scriptures? But I think it would be incredibly naïve (especially in our culture) to think that everyone in the church understands and believes that the Bible is the only reliable source of truth and wisdom for life in this sinful world.

In fact, it seems quiet apparent to me that what God warned about in the days of prophet Amos has come true in our time as well. God told Amos (Amos 8:11), "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord GOD, "When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, But rather for hearing the words of the LORD."

Ironic, isn't it, that at this point in history when the Word of God is available in practically any language and in innumerable translations at the touch of a digital icon, yet so few people are seriously interested in reading it. Tragically, however, this is not only true of the world, but of the church as well.

Witness the fact that a little more than a year ago the Religious News Service (RNS) reported that according to their research "More than half of Americans think the Bible has too little influence on a culture they see in moral decline, yet only one in five Americans read the Bible on a regular basis... Of those who said they do read it, the majority (57 percent) only read their Bibles four times a year or less. Only 26 percent of Americans [who on average have 4.4 Bibles in their home] said they read their Bible on a regular basis (four or more times a week)."¹

Two years ago LifeWay Research surveyed more than 2,900 Protestant churchgoers and found that while 90 percent [say that they] "desire to please and honor Jesus in all I do," only 19 percent personally read the Bible every day.²

Now on the one hand, these statistics are really discouraging because, while it may be true that many of US don't read the word of God regularly, we at least like to comfort ourselves with the thought that other Christians do. But as it turns out, the person sitting

¹ Caleb K. Bell, "Americans Say The Love The Bible but Don't Read it That Much," RNS, <http://www.religionnews.com/2013/04/04/poll-americans-love-the-bible-but-dont-read-it-much/>, (accessed, Jan. 17. 2015)

² Jeremy Webber, "80% of churchgoers Don't Read Bible Daily, Lifeway Survey Suggests," Christianity Today, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2012/september/80-of-churchgoers-dont-read-bible-daily-lifeway-survey.html?paging=off>, (accessed, Jan. 17, 2015).

in pew next to you might not be reading the word either! In fact, just turn to the person next to you and ask... Never mind).

Why is it that so few professing believers today read what God has written? Well, it might be owing to laziness, or spiritual apathy. But I don't think it's due to a lack of interest in spiritual things. It might just be that evangelicals in our day want a spirituality that feels more real, personal, and individualized. We don't simply want to learn about God through a dusty old book. We want a personal and palpable intimacy with Jesus. That may explain why so many popular Christian songs today sound less like biblical worship and more like sappy ballads to one's girlfriend. We want a god who reveals himself through songs and sound-bites on the radio. And when we do actually lay down money to purchase a book on something spiritual, it's less likely to be a copy of the Scriptures than the published testimony of a six-year-old boy who claims to have gone to heaven and back.

One of these books entitled *Heaven is For Real*, sat as #1 on the New York Times best-seller list for 59 weeks! and was later made into a major motion picture. Another such book entitled *The Boy Who Came Back from Heaven* was also a Best Seller. And yet, even when that boy and his mother came out publically and repeatedly to confess that the book was a fabrication invented by the boy's father, neither the publisher nor the Christian book stores that carried it would retract it from their shelves. For 5 years this book has been a major seller. Two days ago, however, the publisher (ironically name after William Tyndale), finally announced that they would no longer sell this book.

You've got to wonder what makes books like these seemingly irresistible to the professing Christian public? Perhaps its because they profess to reveal precious secrets from the heavenly realm. Perhaps people are drawn by the feeling that God is giving us new and exciting revelation. And the publishers are all too eager to fan that spark of expectation. Emblazoned on the cover of these books are the compelling words: "A True Story." And inside the publisher promises that "As you see heaven and earth through Alex's eyes, you'll come away with *new insights* on miracles, life beyond this world, and the power of a father's love."

That's it, isn't it? The promise of "new insights," new revelation from God – when all the while, the story was a complete hoax. It reminds me of what God said through the prophet Jeremiah,

The prophets prophesy falsely,
And the priests rule on their *own* authority;
And My people love it so! (Jer. 5:31)

Beloved, when are we going to wake up and realize that God is not holding out on us? He is not hiding his truth from us. He has freely given us everything we need for life and godliness; every revelation necessary to guide us, and protect us, and bless us is found in His eternal word. More importantly, He has given us everything we need to know Him and to grow in our personal knowledge of Him for a lifetime.

Last week we learned some things about the Authority of God's word. I want to use the remainder of our time together this morning to talk with you about the truthfulness of God's word. God's word is trustworthy. And for that reason, we should give ourselves to reading, studying, and obey it.

I. The Origin of Disbelief:

1. Turn with me all the way back to the book of Genesis, because here we see where the problem of distrusting God's word began.

Read Gen. 2:15-16; 3:1-11

2. Now it needs to be noted from the start that though man was perfect, he was not autonomous. God did not create him in a way that made all the knowledge and insight he would need intuitive from birth. Rather, God created him in such a way that even though he was perfect in human form, he would always be dependent on God's counsel. He would need to find essential truth for life in the things that God would reveal.

3. And notice too that God did not withhold the needed revelation. The very first words God speaks to man reveal something that the Adam could not have known apart from God's word; namely, a promise of great blessing, and a warning of grave danger. The promise of blessing was this; that Adam could freely eat of all the trees in the garden that bore fruit. He would have no lack of satisfying food. In fact, the implication seems to be that trusting God's word would bring about abundant blessing to Adam.

4. As Jay Adams expounds:

At the beginning, man walked and talked with God in the cool of the day. Doubtless, God counseled him at such times. The pre-fall fellowship was unbroken and entirely open, and the counsel consisted of positive, good, beneficial revelation calculated to develop man's full potential. As he was growing under such counsel, he began to grasp something of the potential of language to bring about order and to express concepts. He saw this in his classification of the animals. He experience something of the joys of the satisfaction and fulfillment of work as he kept the garden according to God's instructions. He tasted the sweet fruit of understanding and fellowship as he talked with God and communicated with his wife Eve.³

5. Nevertheless, God's first revelation to man was not merely a promise of blessing but a grave warning as well. There was one particular tree in the garden that was dangerous. Eating its fruit will kill you. So we see that God did not withhold the truth that man needed. To the contrary, He didn't even wait for Adam to ask but took the initiative to reveal what Adam needed to know for his own safety and wellbeing.

6. Third, we should observe that God's counsel was clear: "eat of all the trees but one." This revelation about the blessings and dangers of his environment were not ambiguous or difficult to understand. In fact they were comprehensive, simple, and clear. All Adam needed to do was to heed God's word and he would be blessed forever.

³ Jay Adams, *The Theology of Christian Counseling*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1979), 5

7. Now we come to chapter 3, where Satan enters the picture disguised as a snake. Here we have the first question in the Bible. But it is not God asking the questions or even man. It is the devil himself. And isn't this the way the enemies of God usually operate? They don't come with brash denunciations, but with smooth and polite sounding questions. And notice the object of His questions. He doesn't go after secondary or tertiary issues. Rather, his approach is to question the very Word of God.

8. Satan asks, "Has God said?" Clearly, Satan's first objective is to cast doubt upon God's word. Then, he distorts God's word. And he does so by misstating God's command (3:1), "Indeed, has God said you shall not eat from *any* tree of the garden?" This distortion was intended to confuse and complicate the simple revelation of God. Eve seems to be influenced by Satan's tactics as she too alters God's word by saying (2), "God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it.'"

9. At this point Satan, seeing his advantage, makes a bold move from Doubt, and Distortion, to outright Denial (4), "You surely will not die!" This is a full frontal attack on God's word. And Satan supports his contrary claim by attacking God's character and motives (read 5).

10. In other words, God is holding out on you! The reason he doesn't want you to eat of that tree is because He doesn't want you to become like Him. Don't trust God, trust me! Why do you want to be shackled to God's counsel and God's restrictions and when can be free like I am?

11. All of this, the doubt, distortion, and outright denial was bent on one objective; to get Adam and Eve to distrust God's word. And throughout the millennia since that day Satan's strategy has been the same. But history has revealed that God's revelation to Adam was absolutely true. On the day he ate the forbidden fruit he died. Death came spiritually by devastating his relationship with God. It came physically as all creation, including Adam's physical body, became susceptible to chaos and death. And if not for the mercy of God, it would have resulted in death eternally in that place where the worm never dies and the flames are never quenched.

(I. The origin of Disbelief)...

II. The Origin of Scripture:

1. It's easy to believe the Scriptures are true when you understand where they come from. After all, it is the eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, thrice-holy God who has spoken. Of course His word is true!

- (Num. 23:19) "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"
- (1 Sam 15:29) The prophet Samuel reminded the disobedient king Saul that God, "The glory of Israel, will not lie."
- (Psa. 138:2) God equates His word with His Name. It is impossible to separate God's word from His nature. His word is true because God is Truth.
- (Tit. 1:2) Paul refers to Him as the "God who cannot lie."

2. Its not that God *does not* lie. Rather, it's just that the Holy character of God is absolutely incompatible with anything that is not true. God Himself is the source and measure of all truth, therefore it is, by definition, impossible for God to lie. Satan, on the other hand, is repeatedly called the "deceiver" and the "Father of lies" (Jn. 8:44). In fact, Jesus says that deception is Satan's native language (ibid).

3. So it should be no surprise to us to discover that any new book that purports to offer new revelation about God, angels, Jesus, or the afterlife is a hoax. The "father of lies" is forever coming up with plausible stories and arguments designed to subtly bring about doubt, distortion, and denial of God's word to lead people into distrust.

4. On the other hand, God offers us His word to lead us into relationship with Himself, promise us blessing, and warn us of danger. And where is this trustworthy revelation found? God has give it to us in the Bible.

5. Turn with me to Hebrews 1. Here we are told how God has revealed Himself to man. He says: (read Heb. 1:1-2).

6. How did God reveal truth? He revealed it "in the fathers." That is, in the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, and others. These were God's men before He sent the prophets. The term "prophets" simply means "scripture writers," those who were God's designated spokesmen. This would include not only those who were called prophets, but also kings, like David and Solomon and priests like Samuel. God used them men to bring His word to man, and he did so "in many portions and in many ways."

7. The word for "portions" means "segments." In other words, He had a number of men write various sections of His revealed word. There are 66 books in the bible – 39 in the OT and 27 in the NT. These are the portions or segments. But he also revealed His word in many ways. Sometimes His word came to men in visions. Other times God spoke directly to them or moving in their mind to produce exactly what He wanted them to say. Sometimes God spoke through parables, symbols, and ceremonies. At other times God showed up in bodily form which theologians call Theophanies, by which He would communicate as man with man. Once He spoke out of a burning bush. There were even times in the life of Jesus where God spoke audibly from heaven. Then God sent the ultimate spokesman to reveal His truth to man; namely, His Son – Jesus.

8. When the revelations came, God told these men to write it down. Its important to understand that it was not the men who were inspired but the words God gave them. Turn with me to 2 Timothy (Read. 3:16).

9. Here it is explicit, that it was the words of Scripture that were inspired. Its not that certain men were so gifted and superior to everyone else that their words are thought to be from God. In fact, most of what these men said and wrote was NOT inspired. It wasn't the men, but the words that God gave them on rare occasions that were inspired. Turn to 2 Pet. 1 (Read 1:20-21).

10. Now it's important to consider a couple of words and phrases. In verse 20 we read, "no prophesy is a matter of one's own interpretation." Now, we have to look closely at this. The word here in GK is rooted in the word that means "to loose" or "to unleash" and it is a genitive of source. Peter is speaking about the origin or source of the prophecies.

So Peter is saying that no prophesy in Scripture ever found its source in the heart or mind of man.

10. Then he emphasizes that point in the next verse (21), “no prophesy was ever made by and act of human will.” In other words, none of these men ever sat down at their desk and said, “Today I am going to write words from God.” No, it was never up to them. God gave them His word in His own time and way.

11. Well then how did God reveal His truth to man? Verse 21 concludes by saying, “but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” The word “moved” means “carried along”, like when a leaf is carried along by the water in a stream. So the Spirit of God moved upon these men in such a way that they wrote exactly what He wanted them to write.

12. Beloved, it is so important that we grasp this and hold it tightly as our most precious possession in life. There is a God and He is not silent. He has spoken to us in the Scriptures and every word of it is true. Jesus said while praying to the Father, “Sanctify them by the truth: Your word is truth” (Jn. 17:17)

13. As A. W. Tozer declared, “God is not silent. It is the nature of God to speak. The second Person of the Trinity is called ‘The Word.’ The Bible is the inevitable outcome of God’s continuous speech. It is the infallible declaration of His mind.”

14. The Psalmist makes it clear: (Psa 119:160) “The sum of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.” And in the Last chapter of the last book of the Bible, Revelation, the angel who is giving God’s word to the apostle John says, “These words are faithful and true” (Rev. 22:6)

15. Consider this, God has given us so much more than He gave Adam. We have so much truth and it so immediately accessible. In it we find wisdom for every need, warning for every moral and spiritual danger, promises to motivate and encourage, and most importantly, we find the revelation of God Himself.

16. You see, we don’t need new revelation and the spiritual speculations of men. If there is something new that comes along that agrees with Scripture we don’t need it. And if it disagrees with Scripture, we don’t want it. What we need is the inspired and inerrant word of God. And He has given it to us in a book.

17. What do you need today? God has given us His counselor, the H.S. who will minister His word, His comfort, His truth to you if you will but open it and read in faith.

BI: The Bible is not merely about theology. It’s truth for life that should fill our minds, rule our hearts, and guide our feet.