

Authority and God's Word - Part 1

by Derek Prince

The authority of Scripture is rooted in the Holy Spirit, who is God himself, and is the source of inspiration, guidance, and truth.

Duration: 26:06

Scripture: Psalm 12:6, Matthew 4:4, Matthew 5:17-18, John 10:35, John 14:26, John 16:13, Ephesians 6:17, 2 Timothy 3:16

Topics: "Biblical Authority", "Holy Scripture"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the authority of Scripture, highlighting that all Scripture is inspired by God through the Holy Spirit. It discusses the importance of accepting the entire Bible as profitable and authoritative, not just selective parts. The sermon also delves into Jesus' attitude towards Scripture, showcasing how He used it to overcome temptation and fulfill God's Word. Additionally, it explores the role of the Holy Spirit as the ultimate interpreter and guide in understanding Scripture.

Transcript

To begin with the issue of authority. If you stop and consider it, you realize that the word authority comes directly from the word author. In other words, the authority of any work is the authority of the author.

It's the author who gives authority to whatever he produces. So we need to know who is the author of the Bible. Who is the author of Scripture? And the Bible clearly answers this question.

In 2nd Timothy 3 verse 16 it says, All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. So if you want to be complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work, the source of it all is Scripture. And Paul says all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

The Greek word is God-breathed. And the word for breath and the word for spirit are identical. So it means all Scripture is in-breathed by the Spirit of God.

In other words, the authority behind all Scripture is the authority of the Holy Spirit. He is ultimately the author. He used many different channels and many different instruments.

But behind them all is the authority of the Holy Spirit, who is God himself. So when we confront the Scripture, we confront the authority of God himself. Now it says all Scripture is inspired, not some.

Some people would weed out the passages they consider inspired, from those they don't consider really authoritative. But that is not in line with Scripture. Because the Holy Spirit himself says all Scripture is inspired by God.

And all Scripture is profitable. In other words, there's no books that you can leave out and say they're not important. Books like Ezra and Nehemiah are very important.

The Song of Songs is very important. The prophet Nahum is very important. Don't just focus on a few well-known passages of Scripture and think that they are all that matters because that is not correct.

And if you want to be equipped, you have to be equipped by the whole Scripture. And it'll take you many years. But it's progressive.

You can move on from strength to strength as you meditate on and study and apply the Word of God. And remember that Jesus said building on his foundation is hearing and doing the Word of God. Not just hearing, but hearing and doing.

And then as regards the interpretation of Scripture. There is only one authorized interpreter. And that is the author.

Out there somewhere you can find quite a number of books that have my name on them. I'm the author. If you're not quite certain what they mean, I'm the best person to consult because I know what I meant.

I may not have said it as clearly as I should have done, but I do know what I meant. And if you want to know what any passage of Scripture means, consult the author. He's the only one who is authorized to interpret Scripture.

Peter says in 2 Peter chapter 1, verses 20 and 21. Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation. No individual can say, well this is, I know this is what it means.

The only one that's authorized to interpret is the Holy Spirit. And then he goes on, for prophecy never came by the will of man. But holy men of God spoke as they were moved or born along by the Holy Spirit.

Again Peter points out what Paul has pointed out. The authority behind the Scripture, the source of inspiration, is the Holy Spirit. Now you might say, and very reasonably, but the men that wrote the Bible were in many cases very weak and fallible.

And the Bible even records a lot of their sins. I think that's a mark of the Bible's accuracy. That it records the sins of the people who wrote it.

A lot of people today would hush up their sins and not expose them. And try to present themselves as infallible. No author of the Bible does that.

Even David, who was the author of most of the Psalms, his serious sins are recorded for all to read. So then how can the Bible be infallible, if the people that wrote it were fallible. There's a beautiful answer given to that question in Psalm 12, verse 6. It's one simple verse, Psalm 12, verse 6. The words of the Lord are pure words.

Like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. That's a little picture of how people used to purify metal. They would build a furnace of clay, light a fire in it, and then put the metal there to be purified.

So you've got three things in that picture. You've got the furnace of clay, which is the human instrument, just clay. You've got the fire, which is the Holy Spirit, which purifies the silver, which is the message.

So that tells us how fallible men and women can be the channels to produce an inspired and authoritative word of God. Let me say that again. The clay is the human vessel.

The fire is the Holy Spirit. The silver purified seven times, absolutely pure, is the message of God. And the number seven in the Bible links us to two things, the Holy Spirit and perfection.

And perfection is by the Holy Spirit. So the Bible, though it came through vessels of clay, weak, fallible, sinful men and women. Has been purified seven times by the fire of the Holy Spirit.

It is totally reliable. Now we need to consider the attitude of Jesus himself toward the Bible. Because for us who are his disciples, he is the pattern.

How did he relate to the Bible? Well we looked at the Scripture this morning, but we'll look at it again in John chapter ten. John chapter ten, verse thirty-five. We don't need to look at other verses just then.

John ten thirty-five. Jesus said, and it's in the context of a discussion with the Jewish leaders, that we don't need to go into. If he, that is God, called them gods, to whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken.

And I pointed out this morning, but I'll say it again. There Jesus gives to the Bible, the two titles which his followers have used most ever since. The word of God and the Scripture.

When it says the Bible is the word of God, it means it proceeds from God. It didn't proceed from man, it came from heaven, from God. And when it says the Scripture, it means that which has been recorded in writing.

God said many things which are not recorded in writing. But those that are recorded in the Scripture, in the Bible, are recorded for our special benefit. They contain all the things we need to know for our salvation.

So that was the attitude of Jesus, summed up in that phrase that we looked at this morning. But it'll be good to repeat it. The Scripture cannot be broken.

Nothing can express the authority of Scripture more completely than that simple phrase. It cannot be broken. I would like to invite you to do again this evening, what we did this morning.

Repeat those words with me. The Scripture cannot be broken. Say it once more.

The Scripture cannot be broken. And now remember, God holds you accountable for what you've said. Because he'll expect you to accept the authority of Scripture in every area of your life.

Now let's look at how Jesus himself used Scripture. And here again he's a pattern. We'll turn to Matthew the fourth chapter.

And we'll look at something that happened when Jesus was in the wilderness, being tempted by Satan. Matthew chapter 4, but we need to begin at the end of chapter 3. Chapter 3 at the end records how Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan. And when he came up from the water, the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, descended like a dove upon him and remained upon him.

Notice that, it's important, the Holy Spirit remained on him. The Holy Spirit has descended on some of us at various times. But he hasn't always remained on us.

Because we have said and done things that he couldn't remain on. But Jesus never said or did anything that grieved the Holy Spirit or caused that dove to fly away. And then a voice came from heaven, the voice of God the Father.

This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Now you might think, and I might think, well after that Jesus was going to have a really easy time. He'd had the endorsement of both the Father and the Spirit and the prophet John the Baptist.

But that's not so. So the next thing that happened was, he found himself in the wilderness fasting for 40 days and being tempted by Satan. And so please don't imagine that God's blessing will always make life easy for you.

In fact, in a certain sense it may make life more difficult. Because Satan much more strongly opposes those whom God has anointed. And in Luke's gospel, we weren't turned there.

It says that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. But at the end of the 40 days he came out in the power of the Holy Spirit. Those are two different things.

One thing is to be led by the Spirit. It's another thing to move and operate in the power of the Spirit. And Jesus did not do that until he'd had his conflict with Satan and won.

And in some degree or other that will apply to each of us. We will have to overcome temptation and opposition in order to move in the power of the Holy Spirit. Now when the tempter came to him in Matthew chapter 4, Satan, the first thing he tempted him to do was to doubt.

And that's nearly always the initial approach of Satan. He will not immediately deny the word of God. He'll question it.

He'll cause you to doubt it. This has worked so many times in church history that he never has had to find another tactic. Because it always seems to work.

But don't let it work with you. So you notice the first thing that Satan said to Jesus in chapter 4 of Matthew verse 3. Now when the tempter came to him he said, if you are the son of God, command that these stones be made bread. Now God had just spoken from heaven and said this is my beloved son.

But Satan was challenging him to doubt what he'd heard from God. If you are the son of God, then do something to prove it. Make these stones bread.

But Jesus answered him, it is written man shall not live by bread alone. Incidentally it's interesting, all the three answers that Jesus gave to Satan are all taken from one book. The book of Deuteronomy.

And it's interesting too that neither Jesus nor the devil ever questioned the authority of the book of Deuteronomy. So do I waste your time doing it. So that's how Jesus dealt with temptation.

Very very important. He dealt with temptation by meeting it from the written word of God. It is written.

Don't think that you are clever enough to argue with the devil. He's much cleverer than you are. And he's been in this business a long, long time.

Don't try to convince him with your arguments. Meet him with the Scripture. Each time Jesus was tempted, this is what he said.

It is written, it is written, it is written. And whenever Jesus said that, Satan changed the subject. He knew he had no answer to the Scripture.

So don't be tempted into trying to overcome Satan with your philosophy, or with your theology. Just answer him with the written word of God. You see, Jesus didn't make the mistake that Eve had made.

If you go back to the beginning of human history, in Genesis chapter 3, the first few verses. It says, Now the serpent, who was Satan in bodily form, was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord had made. And he said to the woman, Has God indeed said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden? What did he attempt to do first? To doubt, that's right.

And when you doubt, the next step is disbelief, and the next step is disobedience. Remember that. Don't entertain doubt.

Well Eve made the mistake of thinking that she could meet the devil on his level. So she gave him an answer, Well we may eat of every tree. She didn't want to acknowledge that there were any restrictions, except the tree in the middle of the garden, which is the tree of life.

And concerning that, she said, God has said, You shall not touch it, nor eat of it, lest you die. And notice the devil's answer, The serpent said to the woman, You will not surely die. That's what he's coming at.

He begins by questioning, but he goes on to deny. And if you study church history for the last hundred years or more, you'll find that wherever Satan has persuaded theologians, or preachers, or whoever they may be, to question the scripture. He has always brought them to the point where they actually deny it.

Don't start on that slippery downward path. The scripture is authoritative. It's the Word of God, accept it, live by it, answer the devil with it.

He cannot answer the written Word of God. In Ephesians 6, 17, Paul says, Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. And you probably know there are two Greek words for word.

One is logos, the other is rhema. Logos is the total eternal counsel of God, rhema is a spoken Word of God. And that's the word that's used in Ephesians 6, 17.

Taking the sword of the Spirit, which is the rhema, the spoken Word of God. And when you have to meet the devil, you have to meet him by speaking the Word of God. The Bible will not protect you if it's just in your bookshelf.

Or even if it's just on your bedside table. It only works when you quote it. You have to take it in your mouth and say it for yourself.

And then it becomes a sharp pointed sword from which the devil backs off. He has no answer for you. Now let's look also at what Jesus says about the authority of the written Word of God.

You remember what I said, the word scripture means God's Word in writing. And Jesus said in Matthew 5, verses 17 and 18. Do not think that I came to destroy the law or the prophets.

And that was the Jewish way of speaking about what we call the Old Testament, the law and the prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the Lord till all is fulfilled.

Now the words jot and tittle, jot in modern Hebrew, yud, is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. And a tittle is just a little curve put on a letter in writing to distinguish it from a similar letter. So those are the two smallest items in written scriptures text.

And Jesus says not one of them will ever pass away. This clearly indicates that Jesus acknowledged the absolute authority of the written Word of God. He wasn't talking about the spoken Word of God at that point, because the words jot and tittle only apply to that which is in writing.

So Jesus absolutely endorsed the total authority of the written Word of God. And then a little further on, or quite near the end of his ministry. In Matthew chapter 22, he was dealing with the Sadducees.

Who were the liberals of that day. The people that did not accept the authority of all Scripture. In fact they only accepted the authority of the first five books, the Pentateuch.

And they were challenging the teaching that there will be a resurrection of the dead. And they came to Jesus with a smart question. But this is how Jesus answered them.

In Matthew 22 verses 31 and 32. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God saying, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

Notice how Jesus applied that Scripture. Those words were written by Moses about 14 centuries earlier. They were actually words spoken by the Lord direct to Moses.

But Jesus didn't speak about them as something that was said to Moses 14 centuries ago. This is very powerful. He said, have you not read what was spoken to you by God.

You see, the Scripture is never out of date. It's never just the record of human cleverness. It is God.

And even if it was written 3,000 years ago, it's still God speaking to you today. That's the authority of Scripture, as Jesus understood it. Now we need to consider also, how the life of Jesus fulfilled the Scripture.

If you go through the New Testament, you'll find that in 18 different places. It says something happened in the life of Jesus, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. In other words, not merely did he believe the Scripture.

Not merely did he proclaim the Scripture, but he obeyed the Scripture. His whole life was the outworking of Scripture. You can take various aspects of his life, but we'll just take four.

His birth, his human life, his death, and his resurrection. Concerning all of those, the Scripture says, it took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled. Jesus could not in any way, have more strongly endorsed the authority of Scripture than that.

Now let's turn to the New Testament. What is the authority behind the New Testament? You'll be surprised to learn, it's the same as behind the Old Testament. Let's just look at two passages in which Jesus spoke to his disciples.

In John chapter 14, verses 25 and 26, Jesus is taking leave of his disciples. He's preparing them for the fact that he's going to leave. And he says, these things I have spoken to you, while being present with you.

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, that's the title of the Holy Spirit, the Helper. Sometimes he's called the Comforter. The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

So the authority behind the writings of the apostles, is the authority of the Holy Spirit. And Jesus said he'll do two things. Whatever I didn't teach you, he will teach you.

And whatever I said but you might have forgotten, he will bring to your remembrance. So the record of the Gospels does not depend on human memory. It depends on the truth of the Holy Spirit.

And then again in John 16, verses 12 through 14, the same thing is brought out. Jesus says to his disciples, I still have many things to say to you. But you cannot bear them now.

However when he, the Spirit of truth has come. And let me point out that Jesus breaks the laws of grammar. To emphasize that the Holy Spirit is not an it, but a he.

I can't go into that because it's too complicated. But according to Greek grammar he should have said it. And he didn't, he said he.

In other words, please understand the Holy Spirit is not just an it, he's a he. He's a person and you need to relate to him as a person. When he, the Spirit of truth has come.

He will guide you into all truth. For he will not speak from himself. But whatever he hears, he will speak.

And he will tell you things to come. So again Jesus says, whatever teaching you need that you have not yet received. It will come to you by the Holy Spirit.

Then he says, he will not speak of himself, or from himself. But whatever he hears, he will speak. He will tell you things to come.

And then the next verse, he will glorify me. For he will take of what is mine and declare it to you. And let me point out to you, that's another extremely important mark of the Holy Spirit.

He always glorifies Jesus. And if you ever are confronted by spiritual manifestations that do not glorify Jesus. That give glory to a man or to some other, in some other direction.

You can be sure that it's not the Holy Spirit. Because the supreme ministry of the Holy Spirit is to reveal and to glorify Jesus.

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