

# Reason for Our Hope 1

by Peter Maiden

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*Peter Maiden's sermon emphasizes the authority and divine inspiration of Scripture as foundational to the Christian faith.*

**Duration:** 55:51

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 25:4, Matthew 6:33, Luke 10:7, Ephesians 6:17, 1 Timothy 5:18, 2 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 4:12

**Topics:** "Hope"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the power and significance of the word of God. He describes it as quick, powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, capable of penetrating the soul and spirit of man. The preacher encourages believers to be people of faith who stand upon the word of God, even in challenging circumstances. He references the example of George Muller, a man of extraordinary faith who founded orphanages and relied on God's provision. The preacher also mentions that as Christians, we accept Christian doctrines not solely based on reason, but because they are revealed to us in the Word of God.

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## Transcript

Let's turn together to 2 Timothy chapter 3, this very famous passage in connection with our subject tonight. 2 Timothy 3, and we read from verse 10 to verse 17. Paul writing to his young son in the faith, Timothy.

You however know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings, what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

While evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned, and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you have learned it. And how from infancy you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

All scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1 verse 17, Christ sent me to preach the gospel, not with words of human wisdom, lest the

cross of Christ be emptied of his power. And he continues in chapter 2 of the same epistle, verse 4, My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

It's clear then that men by reason will not know God. We have been called to a life of faith as Christians. This is indeed the Christian faith.

But this doesn't mean that Christianity is unreasonable. It may be well beyond human reason, but that does not mean it is not reasonable. We read continually in the Acts of the Apostles how Paul sought to persuade men, of how he reasoned with men.

And we're even told in Acts 9.22 that soon after his conversion, Saul baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ. Just two days ago, a young man came to me and said, Listen, I'm unwilling to take the blind leap of faith and become a Christian. And I explained to him how you can go so far along the road of reason in your search for God.

And then you come to that point, as you walk along the road of reason, where you have to step on from reason, not out of reason, but you step on from reason into the area of faith. And of course it's in that area that you find God. But it's so important to understand that as Christians, we don't step out of reason.

We step on from reason into another realm, the realm of faith. Now over the next four evenings, we're going to look at the arguments for four of the great Christian doctrines. Now we don't accept these doctrines as Christians merely because they appear reasonable.

We accept them because they are delivered to us, revealed to us, in the Word of God. And that's quite sufficient for us. If we were told something within here, such as the Trinity, which is totally against our reason, we would still accept it, because it's revealed in the Word of God.

But there are many great reasons for believing that, for example, the Bible is the inspired Word of God. And that's what we're going to look at tonight, the authority of Scripture. Surely one of the key issues for the Christian church in this and in every generation.

As Christians, we proclaim that our beliefs and our practices are not just the ideas of men. We declare that Christianity is unique amongst all the religions and philosophies of the world, because our faith has been directly delivered to us by a revelation from Almighty God. Jude, in verse 3 of his epistle, speaks of this faith which he says was once and for all delivered to the saints.

Our faith is not something that men works out through their minds. It is something which was once and for all delivered to us by God himself. Paul, writing in the second epistle to Timothy, from which we've just read, pleads with Timothy to guard the Gospel.

To guard that deposit of truth which God has given to mankind, which is the power of God unto salvation. And of course, as Christians, we believe that this truth, this faith, this Gospel, is revealed in its entirety in the Bible. And with that in our minds, we can see the great importance of the Bible to us as Christians.

It's the foundation of our faith. Just what authority, then, does the Bible possess? Well, authority can be derived from a number of sources. For example, if a Roman Catholic receives a document from the Vatican, and on that document there is the papal imprimatur, the Pope's stamp, then that letter carries immediately for the receiver total authority.

And this, for the Roman Catholic, is because of who it comes from. It comes to him from the Pope. The Pope has given to it his blessing.

The authority of the document, then, is derived from its origin. Authority from origin. Another source of authority is experience.

If you are regularly seeking advice, or regularly seeking information from someone, and their advice or their information is invariably correct, the authority of their words will grow continually in your mind. This is how we're going to look at the Bible tonight. In the light of these two important sources of authority.

And we begin with authority based on origin. How did this book, the Bible, come into being? Well, the Apostle Paul puts it like this in the famous words of 2 Timothy 3.16. He says, All scripture is given by inspiration of God. It is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

If you look at the verse closely, you'll see that Paul is saying two simple things. First of all, he's saying that all scripture is God breathed. That's what the word inspired really means.

Surely Paul could not have used a more deliberate term. Scripture was brought into existence by the breath of God. It was, if you like, exhaled by God.

All scripture is exhaled by God. The second thing which the verse is saying to us, is that because of this origin, because of where scripture has come from, it has total authority over our lives. And this authority is in two particular areas.

First of all, authority over our doctrines, says Paul. Authority over what we believe. Secondly, authority over our daily lifestyle.

It is, he says, profitable for correction, for reproof, and for instruction in righteousness. Now when you turn to the writings of Peter, you'll see that he also describes how the Bible came into being. He gives us his definition or description in 2 Peter 1.21. He says, holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

In a sense then, there is this dual authorship of the Bible. There is a human element. Men spoke, says Peter.

But they only spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Which is why Paul, of course, can say that all of scripture is God breathed. In the original Greek of 2 Peter 1.21, the writer is using a most fascinating maritime illustration.

The picture is of a sailing ship raising its sails. And by their holy lives, the men and the women who wrote the Bible, says Peter, raised their sails. And God, the Holy Spirit, filled those sails.

And carried them along in their writings, exactly in the direction which he wished them to follow. Well then, how did this actually happen? Did God just use these people like transcribing machines? Well, amongst Christians, there are a number of different theories of inspiration. And I want to mention just three tonight.

You will see them in your notes. First of all, mechanical inspiration. Those who accept this viewpoint suggest what I've just mentioned to you.

That God literally dictated what the human writers of the Bible had to express. If this theory is true, the writers were purely passive in this operation. They were rather like a pen in the hand of the writer.

The second theory is known as dynamic inspiration. Those who hold this view believe that God strengthened the mental and spiritual lives of the writers. So that they had a completely new and very special insight on things.

And it was on that basis which they wrote. Then the third theory is the theory known as organic inspiration. You will find that this is the theory which most evangelical scholars accept.

Lewis Burkhoﬀ defines it as follows. The Holy Spirit acted on the writers in an organic way. In harmony with the laws of their own inner being.

He used them just as they were. Their character, their temperament, their gifts, talent, education, culture, vocabulary, and style. Yet the Holy Spirit illumined their minds.

Aided their memory. Prompted them to write. Repressed the influence of sin upon their writings.

And guided them in the expression of their thoughts even to the choice of the very words. I think this human element in the organically inspired word of God is apparent to all who read it. Dr. Rendell Short comments on this in the following way.

The traits exhibited by the books themselves entirely bear this theory out. Each author has his characteristic style. Some writers are very plain, matter of fact.

Some, for example, the writer of Second Chronicles, have a very ecclesiastical tone and vocabulary. The writer of the book of Daniel loves to pile up lists of nouns. Paul is vigorous and impetuous.

John has a list of favorite words. These differences have not been leveled out by any supernatural influence. Rendell Short also comments on the varying pictures of Christ's life and sermons in the Gospels.

Because they're evidently seen through the eyes and memories of independent eyewitnesses. Then he concludes with the following sentence. A vast load of intellectual difficulty, which people have felt in accepting the Bible, is removed if the fact that God has made use of the human personalities of the writers is fully grasped.

Well, whilst this human element is clear, I'm sure we'd all contend that the divine authorship of the Bible is unmistakable. Of course, this is something which the Bible claims for itself. The Bible claims for itself that it is divinely inspired.

Over and over again, in the Old Testament, you read such phrases as, The Lord said. Or, Thus saith the Lord. Or again, The word of the Lord came unto.

The New Testament writers, they claim divine inspiration for the law and the prophets. Most important of all, of course, Jesus makes his position on Old Testament scripture abundantly plain. In fact, some of the Old Testament incidents, which scholars today pour the most scorn upon, Jesus went out of his way to show that he believed were clearly factual.

For example, you have Noah's Ark, laughed at at many today. But if you read Matthew 24, 37 and 38, you'll find that Jesus accepted that as fact. Jonah, in the belly of a whale or of a large fish, again laughed at by many today.

But Matthew 12, 39 and 40 shows that Jesus accepted it as fact. Possibly most amazing of all, Sodom and Gomorrah, fire and brimstone raining down on these cities. People would say, total folly today.

But again, if you read Luke 17, 29, you'll find that Jesus accepted it as an actual act of history. Of course, in Matthew 5, 17 to 19, Jesus makes his position on the whole of the Old Testament quite clear. Think not, he says, that I have come to destroy the law and the prophets.

I have not come to destroy them, but to fulfill them. And he goes on to speak about the punishment of those who take away just one jot or tittle from the Old Testament law. And in a very important verse in John 10, 35, Jesus, speaking of Old Testament scripture, says, The scripture cannot be broken.

So there's no doubt about it, that as far as the Old Testament is concerned, both Old Testament writers and New Testament writers, including Jesus himself, claim its divine inspiration. But what about the New Testament? Well, I think we need to turn together to 1 Timothy chapter 5 and to a very important verse. 1 Timothy 5 and verse 18.

1 Timothy 5, 18. For the scripture says, the scripture says, Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the corn, and the worker deserves his wages. Now you might well ask, why is that such an important verse? Well, it's important for the following reason.

Paul is here taking two quotations and he's putting them together. One of these quotations, you shall not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn, is from the Old Testament. It's found in Deuteronomy 25 and verse 4. The second quotation, the laborer is worthy of his reward, is in fact a statement which Jesus made, and it's found in Luke's Gospel chapter 10 and verse 7. So here the Apostle Paul is taking Old Testament writings and the statements of Jesus, and he is calling them both scripture.

Now from this and other references, we can see that the early church placed the spoken words of Jesus, as they were collected in written form, they placed them alongside Old Testament scripture. So the writings of Jesus were clear on that. But what about the epistles? Do they claim inspiration for themselves? Well of course often Paul would speak about the word he was writing not being his own word, but coming from God.

But turn again to a very interesting passage, 2 Peter chapter 3 and verses 15 and 16. Here you can see what Peter, one of the apostles, thought of Paul's writings. 2 Peter 3, 15.

Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand.

I am encouraged by Peter's remark, I'm sure you will agree with him. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other scriptures, to their own destruction. So Peter quite obviously is placing the writings of Paul in the category of scriptures as well.

So I think you can clearly argue that the whole of the Bible claims divine inspiration and authority for itself. Well is there any evidence to back up such claims? I believe there is. I believe the evidence is abundant.

And we don't have time to look at it all tonight. But let's make a start. And let's start with the argument of continuity.

Because the Bible isn't really one book. It's a library of books, a collection of books. Sixty-six in all.

Written by more than forty different authors. Their writings took place over sixty generations. Spanning a time gap of at least sixteen hundred years.

The writers came from an enormous variety of background, culture, and education. Just listen to this brief list for a start. Moses, a political leader, trained in the universities of Egypt.

He was one author. Peter, a fisherman, was another. Amos, a herdsman.

Joshua, a military general. Nehemiah, a cup bearer to the king. Daniel, a prime minister.

Luke, a doctor. Solomon, a king. Matthew, a tax collector.

Paul, a converted rabbi. And on and on you could go. Showing the enormous variety of education, culture, and background from which the Bible writers came.

Now, their writings took place on three continents. Asia, Africa, and Europe. And they wrote in three languages.

They wrote, of course, in Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. Many controversial subjects are dealt with by these writers. And yet, though they're written over so many years, from such a large geographical area, and though many of the subjects normally create such opposing opinions, there's an undeniable agreement and continuity throughout their writings.

The unfolding story of God's plan to redeem mankind is taken up by one writer. He adds his little piece. He passes it on to the next.

He adds his, and so the process continues. Many of these writers would never ever meet each other. They would have absolutely no idea of what the others wrote.

This continuity and agreement is quite remarkable. And I believe it certainly points to the divine authorship of Scripture. You can add to the argument of continuity the fact of the continuing popularity of this book around the world.

The Bible has been translated and re-translated and paraphrased more than any other book in existence. The Encyclopedia Britannica says that by 1966, many years ago now, of course, By 1966, the whole Bible had appeared in 240 languages and dialects. One or more of the whole books of the Bible in 739 additional languages.

A total publication of over 1,280 world languages. When those figures were compiled, a further 3,000 men and women were busily at work translating the Bible into fresh languages. Well, if its translation is amazing, its production and its distribution is equally amazing.

Overall, there is absolutely no book that reaches or even begins to compare to the circulation of the Scriptures. Take just one Bible publishing house, that's the British and Foreign Bible Society. About 30 years ago, for the British and Foreign Bible Society to meet its demands around the world, it had to publish one copy of the Bible every three seconds, day and night, just to meet the orders that it had around the world.

And they're just one of numerous Bible societies, and the Bible Society is one part of the massive operation of producing Bibles around the world. Add to that the amazing romance of the preservation of the Scriptures down through the centuries. The preservation of the original documents is quite amazing in itself.

These books, of course, were originally written on highly perishable materials. Papyrus, parchment, vellum, and so on. They had to then be copied and re-copied by hand for hundreds of years.

Yet the Bible has more manuscript evidence today than any other ten pieces of classical literature combined. Extraordinary how when you're arguing the case for the Bible to someone, they may well say to you, well how do you know that what's written down in the Bible is what actually Jesus said? I mean, so many years passed until it was put down in written form, and until we have the first copy of the Bible. I always say to such people, have you ever read the writings of Plato? Many haven't, of course.

Some have. I say to them, if you did read the writings of Plato, would you question that what you read were actually the words of Plato? Most normal people would say no, they wouldn't question it. When did Plato write? About a hundred years before Christ.

What's the first manuscript we have of Plato's writings? It's in the 10th century. The very first manuscript evidence of the Bible comes within a hundred years of the last author writing. The original manuscript evidence for the Bible, confirmed over and over again by recent discoveries in the desert, of course, is quite extraordinary.

And consider its preservation from destruction by world powers. Emperor Diocletian's Edict of A.D. 303 is typical of many which have been issued throughout history all around the world. His edict demanded the destruction of Christians and of their sacred book.

Twenty-five years later, Emperor Constantine, the very next emperor of the Roman Empire, demanded the preparation of fifty copies of the scriptures at the expense of the Roman government. Many of you will have heard of the famous boast of the French philosopher Voltaire and the resulting irony. He boasted as an atheist that in one hundred years Christianity would have been swept from existence and would pass forever into history.

Only fifty years later, the Geneva Bible Society were using his old house to house a press which was producing thousands and thousands of Bibles. Then consider the preservation of scripture amid so much criticism. No other book has had to face the amount of critical scrutiny that the Bible has faced.

Time and time again we've heard of discoveries which have finally disproved the Bible. Yet always, as time takes its course, it's the discoveries which prove to be invalid. The validity, the authenticity of scripture is still to be disproved.

Our time is passing, but I think it would be wrong of me to close this section without mentioning the argument of prophecy. This subject could in itself, of course, have kept us busy for the whole of the

evening, indeed for our four evenings. So let's consider just one line of Old Testament prophecy and its fulfillment in the New Testament.

And we'll look at messianic prophecy. If you read through the pages of the Old Testament, you'll see that Old Testament scripture speaks of a prophet who would arise just before the birth of Christ to point people to Christ. Of course, in the New Testament, we meet John the Baptist.

The Old Testament speaks of Jesus being born of a virgin in the small town of Bethlehem, Judea. He would be a descendant of King David. He would enter Jerusalem on an ass.

He would be betrayed by a friend for 30 pieces of silver. The money obtained for the betrayal would be given to a potter who would buy a field with it. Jesus would be struck on the face by his enemies.

His friends would forsake him. He would be persecuted, finally muttered. Yet he would face it quietly, calmly, without attempting to justify himself.

All of this we read in the Old Testament, and we continue. His executioners would gamble for his clothes. His bones would not be broken, though his body would be pierced.

He would be offered a bitter drug whilst hanging on the cross. That's just a small portion of Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah. When were they written? Between five and seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus Christ.

And every one of them has been found true and has come to pass in the New Testament. In fact, if any of you are interested in making a thousand pounds, there is a foundation in America who offer one thousand pounds for anyone who can find an Old Testament prophecy concerning Christ, which was not fulfilled during his lifetime. What's the probability of these prophecies being fulfilled in one man? Is this just an amazing stroke of chance which we're dealing with? Well, a very famous mathematician, Dr. Peter Stoner, has done a study arguing, if you're a mathematician, you'll know the argument, from the science of probability as to how possible it is for eight, just eight, of the Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ to be fulfilled in one man.

When he got his calculator out and he tried to put a number on paper, it was so large the paper would not contain it. So he said the best way to describe the possibility would be as follows. Go to the state of Florida, one of the largest states in the United States of America, and cover it in silver dollars, a coin of about that size.

And make sure the silver dollars are two feet thick throughout the whole state. And then take one man and blindfold him. Then mark one of the dollars, throw it into the state, get a large spoon and stir the whole thing.

Then send the man anywhere he likes in the state of Florida, tell him he can pick up one dollar. What's the possibility of him picking up the marked dollar? Dr. Stoner says, about the same as just eight of the Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ being fulfilled in one man. The continuity of the Bible, the popularity of the Bible, the preservation of the Bible, the prophecies of the Bible point clearly to its divine authorship.

It's apparent that the human authors only spoke and only wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. And this is the foundation of the Bible's authority. Authority based on origin.

These writings are quite evidently God-breathed. But secondly, we spoke of authority from experience. And we'll have to deal with this much more briefly.

But just what has been the experience of people who have read this book? Many would testify to the amazing moral power of Scripture. Of what other book could it be said that its entry into a nation or a home or an individual's life has effected a moral and spiritual revolution for the better? The testimony of Charles Darwin, the author of the book, *The Origin of Species*, from which came the theory of evolution, would not be suspected of any undue bias towards Christianity. And yet this is what he writes in his book, *The Voyage of the Beagle*.

He gives in that book a dismal account of the misery, low estate, and dangerous wickedness of the people of Tierra del Fuego. When he returns to the island, many years later, after the Bible has been distributed throughout the island, the change for the better is so incredible that he not only testifies his astonishment and his admiration, but he became a regular subscriber to the missionary society which was working there. Near a home in his own village, the preaching of the Bible had such a good effect on people who met in a hall which he had loaned for the purpose of preaching that he wrote to the preacher the following letter, Your services have done more for the village in a few months than all of my efforts for many years.

We have never been able to reclaim a drunkard. Through your services, I do not know that there is a drunkard left in my village. Those are the words of the founder of the theory of evolution.

I could keep you here all night giving you examples of the amazing impact which scripture has had upon people of all kinds. Many of you will know the story of Frank Morrison, the leading lawyer who set out to disprove Christianity. And as we'll see on Saturday night, I think it is, he went to the right place.

He said, if I want to destroy Christianity, all I have to do is destroy the resurrection. There's no resurrection, there's no Christianity. And he's quite right.

So what did he do? He went to the scriptures. He went to Galilee, he went to the towns and villages in which Jesus lived and where the crucifixion and resurrection was supposed to take place. And he wrote his book.

But of course it wasn't a book to disprove the resurrection. The book can be bought in any Christian bookstore today. It's entitled, *Who Moved the Stone?* And it's an argument for the validity of the resurrection.

And he testifies in that book how as he read the scriptures, they became the living word of God to him and changed his life entirely. A friend of mine who's a missionary in West Africa did a very unwise thing one day. He went walking through the streets of the town with a wallet in his back pocket.

It's something you shouldn't probably do in Britain, but you certainly shouldn't do it in Western Africa. And sure enough, his wallet departed. But a couple of days later, the man returned who had stolen it to his home.

Because inside the wallet, there was just a fragment of a Christian tract containing a few Bible verses in the authorized version of the scriptures. This man only spoke pidgin English. And yet he read this glorious Elizabethan English.

And he was dramatically converted. And like Zacchaeus before him, he wanted to restore that which he had stolen. The amazing impact of scripture, the authority of the Bible, is not only based on its origin, but it's backed up by experience.

Well, very quickly, let's just deal with two common criticisms of the Bible. First of all, people say science has disproved the Bible. What do we say to such people? Well, in reply, it's important to recognize that the Bible is not written from a scientific viewpoint.

This is not a science textbook. And as Christians, we must not treat it as so. Its language is that of the common people.

And it was written for common people. Its subject matter is primarily religious and spiritual. But nevertheless, one of the most marvelous things about the Bible is that although it was written in a day of ancient ignorance and superstition, it does not contain the popular errors and fallacies of that day.

Take Moses as an example. We're told that he was the crown prince of Egypt. And he would attend the best of their schools.

The Bible tells us he was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Such wisdom today is considered pure nonsense. But not one of those ancient theories can be found anywhere in the writings of Moses.

Take the prophets. Many of them, when they lived and wrote, may well have believed that the world was flat. But nowhere in their writings do they teach this.

On the contrary, they teach the very opposite, describing the greatness and majesty of God. Isaiah says in chapter 40 and verse 22 of his prophecy, God sits upon the circle of the earth. And many ancient travelers, if only they'd read Isaiah's prophecy, would have traveled with much less fear and worry.

Skeptics, of course, have been saying that science has disproved the Bible for many years. Don't get the idea that this is something new. And they've given many examples.

But it seems that as science progresses and advances, it's the Bible which stands and previous scientific thought constantly collapses. Let me just give you one example. In 1861, the French Academy of Science, a national institution, published a list of 51 scientific facts, each of which, it was alleged, disproved some statement in the Bible.

Today, any scientist who knows his salt will tell you that the Bible remains as it was in 1861, but not one, not one, of those 51 established facts is today held by men of science. Well, of course, another common objection is that the Bible disproves itself. I'm sure you've been told, as I've been told, that this book is full of errors.

You must have heard people say that. It's amazing, though, isn't it, how when you try and get them to detail, they have so little to say. The majority of documented errors are so unimportant that it's not really worth spending time on them.

Critics say, for example, that in Mark's account of the inscription which Pilate placed over the crucified Jesus, the wording was, the King of the Jews, whilst Dr. Luke says it was, this is the King of the Jews. People have actually used that as an argument against the Bible. You can see how they're having to clutch at the very smallest straws.

More meaningful critics, for many years, said that Dr. Luke's statement that the island of Cyprus was ruled by a proconsul and that Lysanias was a contemporary tetrarch with the Herodian rulers was definitely wrong. Archaeology, we were told, disproved that point. But comparatively recent archaeological discovery has absolutely vindicated the biblical statements.

It's been truly said that the enemies of the Bible have met no more relentless foe than the science of archaeology, allowing them for translation errors, and there must be some of them, allowing for copyist errors, and there must be some of them, allowing for the fact that the Bible is organically inspired, that it's seen and expressed through the personalities of the writers. I would still argue that there is not one statement of the Bible which can be proven to be erroneous. In my estimation, there is no doubt whatsoever that there is abundant argument for this cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith, that this book is the word of God, God breathed, exhaled by God, carrying with it divine authority.

Well, you've sat marvellously well. I've only noticed two or three people nodding off to sleep, which is a great encouragement to me. I expect it many more.

I just want to end with five practical points. If this Bible is the word of God, what are we to apply? What are we to say in application? Number one, we must continue to fight for the foundational truth of the inspiration and authority of Scripture. And let me tell you, this is going to be a tough battle in the 1980s.

I don't know whether any of you get the international news magazine Newsweek. If you do, you'll know that on January the 1st, 1980, the beginning of a new decade, the centre page article, and in fact the front of the magazine as well, was entitled The Search for the Real Jesus. And we were told within the centre page article that in 1982 there is going to be a world conference of theologians and scientists.

And together they are going to finally decide which statements of the gospel attributed to Christ were actually spoken by Christ. And they're going to use all the modern sciences available to us. And they give a list of the sciences which will be used.

The interesting point is that there are only ten sentences under discussion. Everything else has already been discarded by the scientists and the theologians. Modern science, we are told, proves that all but ten of the so-called statements of Christ are not the words of Christ.

Modern science proves it, we are told. I was very encouraged to read in the article that when God said, or when Jesus said, they're pretty sure that's authentic. Now that's nice, isn't it? And when he said, that really sounds like the genuine Jesus of Nazareth.

It's going to be a massive fight for us who are evangelicals in the 1980s. The article ended with the paragraph, Who is most threatened by these discoveries? Answer, conservative evangelical Christians. Those who base their beliefs upon the word of God.

Now how are we going to react to this? Well, if you know anything about the evangelical theological world, you'll know that there's already been a reaction. There's now a book on the market entitled, This I Cannot Believe. This is the English book which describes a strong move amongst American evangelicals.

Moving away from what they call the inerrancy of Scripture, merely to the infallibility of Scripture. Now what do they mean? Well, they mean that the Bible is infallible as far as doctrine is concerned. But it's not inerrant as far as science, history, numbers, geography is concerned.

Many evangelicals now hold that view. If they can remain evangelicals holding that view. The Bible is no longer without error.

It has errors we are talking. It's merely authoritative for faith and doctrine. The problem is of course, if this book is exhaled by God, and it's not entirely true, what kind of a God do we worship? Is he really holy? Is he really righteous? And can this book really be trusted in the final analysis? I believe we have a great fight in the 1980s for the authority of Scripture.

And if we appear to be fools for Christ's sake today, then by the end of the decade, we certainly will appear to many to be much more foolish. Secondly, we must recognize the authority of this book over our lives. To do so, of course, is to recognize the lordship of Christ.

Because this is his word, and it's here that he is revealed. We're living in the age of situation ethics. We're told that things aren't right or wrong, it all depends on the circumstances.

As Christians, we need to rejoice in the total authority of Scripture. Not only over what we believe, but over our lifestyle, as 2 Timothy 3, 16 shows so clearly. Of course, to live truly under the authority of Scripture today will be to live a radical life in our generation.

We need to accept the guidance of Scripture for our lives. I'm not suggesting the verse mentality necessarily, although that has been helpful to some. But what I'm suggesting is that we need to soak ourselves in the word of God.

Particularly whilst we're young. We need to spend hours in this book so that we will be able to think theologically. So that we'll respond to the many situations of life biblically.

Many things being poured into your mind today. Particularly through the television screen, right there in the center of your home. The mind of the world is being poured into your mind.

Now unless you saturate your mind in Scripture, you've no hope. You will respond to the situations of life in a worldly sense rather than in a biblical sense. We need to get to know Scripture so that we're truly guided by it in our lives.

Thirdly, we need to recognize the authority of the Bible in our warfare against the devil. I suppose there's no way in which you can see Jesus' view of Scripture more clearly than in the Temptations. There in the barren wilderness of Jishamun.

After 40 days and nights without food, the tempter comes and tempts Jesus in these three separate directions. And it doesn't matter how the devil seeks to get at him, Jesus, whose mind has been soaked in Scripture, responds biblically. He doesn't use human logic, though he could have done so.

I'm sure he could have sent the devil running by his human logic, untainted by sin. He could have called for angelic assistance. But no.

He chooses to rest in the power of Scripture against the devil. Hide God's word in your heart. And when Satan comes, there's no greater shield of defense against him than Scripture.

How I thank God that when I was 18, I lived two miles from where I worked, and buses were not convenient. I had to walk to work, and I had to walk back again. And the quickest way was over a park.

And you would have found me, morning and evening, rain, hail, or shine, walking across the park with a book open, often covered in polythene. And you probably thought I was completely insane, because I'm a very slow learner. And I had to repeat these Scriptures which I was trying to learn over and over again, vocally, out loud, just to get them into my thick skull.

But I thank God that over 400 Scriptures were indelibly fixed on my mind, it would seem, through that process. And so often, not always, but so often now, when temptation comes, there's immediately a Scripture which comes into my mind. And I don't have to decide whether this is right or whether this is wrong.

I know from Scripture that it is so. Can I encourage all of you to spend time memorizing Scripture? Set yourself a program. Maybe just a couple of verses a week.

Memorize Scripture. Jesus did it. Even though He was the Son of God, He was, in a sense, a normal human being.

And He had to spend time memorizing the Old Testament. If He needed to, how much more do you and me? Fourthly, we need to recognize the authority of the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, in our evangelism. We need to preach the Word.

Let's preach biblically. Let's soak our sermons in Scripture. So often today, we're hearing the experiences of men.

Often humorous and exciting. Well, it's great to listen to. But what authority does it have? Your experience has no greater authority than my experience.

If you're comparing experiences with an atheist, you've got very little to stand on. We need to preach. We need to teach our Sunday school scholars.

We need, in our personal witnessing, to be biblical in our conversation. It amazes me that so many churches today, when they choose to display something on the notice board, do not display Scripture. They display some pleasant little poem by some human author, or some famous statement.

The Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, pierces into the soul and the spirit of man. Let's preach the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit. And a fifth practical conclusion, which I don't think is contained in your notes, is that therefore, we should be men and women of faith.

You know, if we really believe this book, as I'm sure you all do, we should be men and women who know how to stand upon it. Who know how to believe when all the circumstances are against us. I had to preach at Dundee University last Friday on faith.

And in preparing the message, I re-read some of the biography of George Muller of Bristol. This great... one of the founders, I suppose, of the Brethren Movement. George Muller of Bristol, the man who had all those orphanages down there.

In one of the biographies, he tells the story of how one day he came down to breakfast and there was not a cornflake in the larder. And all the children came to their seats. One of the staff who was due to say grace on that occasion came to Muller and said, what are we going to say grace for? There's nothing here to thank God for.

Muller quietly said to her, go and thank God for what He is going to give us for our breakfast. She looked at him in utter astonishment. And he said, haven't you read Philippians 4.19? My God shall supply all your needs.

Does the Bible say it or does it not? She agreed, the Bible said it. Then go. God will provide.

She prayed. And sure enough, there was a knock on the door. God sometimes uses unusual circumstances and I'm not sure the grocer van driver believed it was God's hand.

But outside of the door, there's an accident. Not a serious one. But groceries from a grocery van were strewn all over the road.

And the man saying it was an orphanage said, I can't sell this. Please come and take anything you need for your children. Do we believe this book? When all the circumstances are against us, is it the infallible, inerrant word of God or is it not? If it is, we should be men and women of extraordinary faith.

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