

John 9

by W.F. Anderson

The sermon explores the healing of the blind man in John 9, emphasizing the importance of personal experience in faith and the authority of Scripture as the Word of God.

Scripture: Matthew 5:17-19, John 13:17, 2 Timothy 3:16, James 1:22, 2 Peter 1:16

Topics: "Biblical Authority", "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of the word of God and its authority in the life of a believer. He references 2 Peter 1:16, where Peter declares that they were eyewitnesses of Jesus' majesty and did not follow cleverly devised myths. The speaker also discusses the significance of the prophetic word and its reliability. He then moves on to talk about the New Testament and how it confirms the authority of the Old Testament. The sermon concludes with a discussion on the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the importance of understanding the Bible's teaching about itself.

Transcript

The only thing consistent about me is my inconsistency. I started out to take up a series of studies in the life of our Lord, and I'm changing. And I want to look at various passages, as time permits, this afternoon, beginning with John chapter 9, which is an incident in the life of our Lord.

But there's certain concerns that come out of experience, and I'm thinking, I suppose, particularly of our young people here today, and I want to get at one of those this afternoon. John chapter 9, verse 35. Remember, this is the story of the man who was born blind, and our Lord had healed him.

And he'd been thrown out of the synagogue because he wouldn't deny that Jesus was a good man. Verse 35 of John 9, Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him, he said, "'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' He answered, "'And who is he, sir, that I might believe in him?' Jesus said to him, "'You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you.' He said, "'Lord, I believe.'" They worshiped him. Matthew, Gospel chapter 5, verse 17.

Matthew 5, verse 17. Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets. I have come not to abolish them, but to fulfill them.

Truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commanders, and teaches men so, shall be

called least in the kingdom of heaven. But he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Why do you believe that the Bible is the Word of God? And what do you mean by the Word of God? It will not do to say, I simply take it by faith. Faith is not something that is an entity in itself. You cannot have faith by itself, regardless of all the popular religious songs in the country and other places.

Faith must have an object. And when you say, I simply take the Bible as the Word of God on faith, faith on what? And if we are to grant that, are you prepared to take the whole of the Scriptures as the Word of God? And do you mean the King James translation, or another translation? What do you mean is the Word of God? And when you say the Word of God, do you mean the Word in the Bible? Or do you mean the thought that the Bible conveys? When you say the Bible is inspired, do you mean the writer was inspired when he wrote? Do you mean that the act of writing was inspired? Do you mean the words that he wrote were inspired? I'm raising this issue because in the evangelical world today, and I speak of the evangelical world including the assembly and outside the assembly, in the evangelical world today, there is no more vexed question than the inspiration of Scripture. And what is the Word of God? I've read John chapter 9 because I think this is the experience of most of us here today.

There may have been some of us who were convinced that the Bible is the Word of God before we came to Jesus Christ, but I don't think that we drew a majority on it. There were some of us here who simply heard somebody preach the gospel and believed in Jesus Christ, and we were born again. And the idea of what the Bible is had never entered our heads, and didn't enter our heads when we trusted Jesus Christ, but we knew we were born again.

And that's pretty much like the man in John chapter 9. He was born blind, our Lord Jesus came along and healed him, and this word got around that here's a guy who was born blind that's been healed, and of course all the religious leaders pounced on him immediately. Who healed you? Well, I don't know who healed me. All I know is I'm healed.

Well, this can't be. Well, they got his parents. Are you sure this boy was born blind? Well, yeah, we're sure he was born blind.

How did he get healed? We don't know. Ask him yourself. Well, did this man call Jesus healed? Well, he's outside our religious circle.

He must be a pretty wicked man. And this man began to reason from his own experience. We've never heard of a man being born blind and being healed.

Anybody who does that is doing a good work. Anybody who does a good work like that is from God. I'm convinced the man who healed me is from God.

And as soon as they said that, they turned out of synagogue. The man who healed him came to him and said, Do you believe in the Son of Man or the Son of God? It's an alternate reading of the text. What was his response? You tell me who he is and I'll believe.

Why? Based on my personal experience with you, I'm convinced you are a man of God. And because of my personal experience with you, I'll believe anything you say. So you just point him out.

You show me who the Son of Man is and I'll believe because you tell me. And that's pretty much the basis of our belief in the Scripture of the Word of God. Because of our personal experience with Jesus Christ, and most of us, myself included, and I grew up in a Christian home, did not believe in Jesus Christ because we first believed the Bible was the Word of God.

We heard the gospel message, and we believed in Jesus Christ in response to the invitation in that gospel message. And out of that experience with Jesus Christ, we were convinced of who He is. And now we are willing to accept anything He says.

What does He say about the Bible? That really is the issue. What does He say about the Scripture? And here, in a wide spectrum of theologians, liberal, evangelical, neo-Orthodox, see if you can accept the trustworthiness of the record, it's pretty clear what Jesus Christ thought about the Scripture. He thought about the Scripture just exactly what the Jews of His day thought about them, the Pharisees and the Rabbis.

That is, they are the Word of God, they are inspired of God, they are authoritative in every word of it. There can be little doubt that this is what our Lord held. Now, a prior question which I'm ignoring is, do we have a reliable record of what Jesus Christ said? And here, I'm going to have to leave you to some reading on your own.

I'm going to suggest you get F.F. Bruce's book, *The New Testament Documents, Are They Reliable?* And I'm assuming, without going into the question, we have a generally, I believe more than that, but I'm assuming we have a generally reliable record of what Jesus Christ said. One of the most helpful studies I ever did was to go through the Gospels and make a list of everything Jesus Christ said about the Scripture. If there's one thing that settled my own mind about what is the Word of God, it was that study.

If I accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, as the Son of God, as authoritative in my life, then what He says about the Scripture settles the whole question. And if I've got any doubts in that area, it seems to me the first question I've got to settle is the question of Jesus Christ. If I settle that, then what He says about the Scripture settles the question for me.

What does He say about the Scripture? Well, I'm trying to compress into a few minutes what takes us six weeks and a day to go through this rather intensive study. The whole area of His teaching is based on the Word of God. Put in the Sermon on the Mount, He said, It has been said to you of them of old time, but I say unto you, He's not saying the Old Testament said, but I'm giving you something different.

But your teachers, and if you understand, the authority of the Jewish rabbis was entirely traditional. It's what the rabbis before them had said. It is what the judges of Israel had decided the law meant in any given case.

And this was the startling thing about our Lord's ministry. It was so refreshing. He spoke as a man having authority and not as a scribe.

He wasn't quoting what rabbis so and so said. He was saying, this is what the Word of God said. Now, the contrast in the Sermon on the Mount is between what they had been taught by the rabbis and what the Old Testament really said.

For example, the Old Testament said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. And the rabbis teased on this. Uh-huh.

You are to love your neighbor. That means you are free to hate your enemy. Our Lord says nothing to me.

That's what the rabbis said. That's not what the Word of God said. And his ministry was based on the Word of God.

The reason he got into so much trouble with the religious leaders of his day is because he totally ignored their tradition and got back to the Word of God. And one of the healthiest chapters you can read and think about the implications of is Mark chapter 7, where our Lord knocked heads with the Pharisees over a point of tradition and all his own pent-up anger at their holding to tradition instead of the Word of God came rolling out and he let them have it about nullifying the Word of God by their tradition. His whole ministry was based on what the Scripture said, the Old Testament.

He constantly appealed to it for the authority of his teaching. He insisted that this was the only way to please God. He demanded this of his followers.

He preached it to the multitude. They must obey the Word of God. But most striking to me was his own personal objection to the Scripture.

If anybody was above the Word of God, it was the one who gave the Word, the Son of God. But he subjected himself in his public life and in his private life to the teaching of Scripture. When he met Satan in the wilderness and the temptation was recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, it's still in Matthew and Luke.

And he met Satan with the verse of Scripture. Now, look, let's face it here. If you're told that all you have to do is quote Scripture to Satan and he's going to turn and run from you, you're in for some pretty bad shock.

It doesn't work. I've tried it. Our Lord did not defeat Satan by quoting a verse of Scripture to Satan.

Satan will quote you a verse right back. Our Lord said to Satan, Man shall not live by bread alone. That wasn't going to turn Satan on its heel and make him run.

Our Lord was telling Satan this. Scripture says, Man shall not live by bread alone. And I am committed to that Scripture.

I do not live by bread alone. Why not? Because Scripture says, Man shall not live by bread alone. And when Satan said, Well, throw yourself off the pinnacle of the temple, Our Lord comes back with this written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

And the reason he wouldn't do it is not because it wouldn't work, but because he was bound to obey the Scripture which said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. And he wouldn't put God to the test because he himself was subject to Scripture. And when he comes on the night of his betrayal, Peter takes out the sword to defend him.

Our Lord stops the whole business with, How shall the Scripture be fulfilled? Peter, I am committed to obey the Word of God in my own personal life, though it cost me my life. And it was his own personal subjection to the Word of God that he was bound by it, by its authority. And it's first, because of our relationship with Jesus Christ, our conviction of who He is, we accept what He has to say about the Scripture.

And his view of the Scripture is not in doubt. Now, what about the New Testament? Well, let me move on from there. In John chapters 14 and 16, part of our Lord's Upper Room discourse, he talks about the ministry of the Spirit of God.

Now, we are very good at wrestling Scripture, ripping it out of its context, and taking... Our selectivity is amazing. What we pick out and what we leave, entirely arbitrary, just what suits us. And in John 14, our Lord made some promises about the Spirit of God.

When He is come, He will bring to your remembrance all things whatsoever I have said unto you. Now, where are you going to get ahold of that? Say, that's the ministry of the Spirit of God to me. So I get ahold of my kids in a mess, and I say, now look, let's put this thing to the test.

Do you believe that verse in the Scripture? Oh yes, I do, I do, I do. Then how come you flunk that test on the light of Christ? If that Scripture means what you say it means, you ought to get 100% on any test on the four Gospels on the light of Christ. Because the Spirit of God is bound to bring to your remembrance everything that Jesus said.

One of the things you learn in studying the Bible is you better pay attention to who a given statement is made. And in the upper room, there were eleven apostles. Not the whole band of believers, eleven apostles.

Twelve in long unison. And I don't think it would be difficult to demonstrate that the word apostle has a wide use in the Messenger, but it also has a narrow use in the Scripture of a certain group of men to whom certain authority was given. I don't think that would be difficult to demonstrate from these testaments.

To thee, our Lord said, the Spirit of God will come and bring to your remembrance everything I said to you. And that's my guarantee of the accuracy of the Gospel narrative. When these men wrote an account of what our Lord said and did, it was that ministry of the Spirit of God that ensured the accuracy of what they wrote.

And what they preached, by the way, before the Scriptures were written in the New Testament. But our Lord said to them, not only would he bring to your remembrance all things whatsoever I have said unto you, he will guide you into all truth. And he will show you things to come.

And this, in my own judgment, covers the ministry of the apostles in their teaching, and in their prophetic ministry, say, the book of the Revelation. It's because the apostles are our Lord's authorized spokesmen, because he has authorized them to speak for him, that I take the accuracy and reliability of the New Testament. Now, there's another way of going at this.

I can approach the Scriptures, this book, this Bible, we'll just call it a book, I can approach it in two ways. I can look at the phenomenal Scriptures, that is, the accidents of the writing that I find, the obvious implications of the humanity of the writers. I can look at the way they messed up grammar, and they did mess up grammar, as this may be some encouragement to those of you having trouble with English.

They did not always follow the nice rules of grammar, you know. And my English teachers used to bug me about a dangling participle. I still don't know what a dangling participle is.

Or a split infinitive. Well, some of the writers of the New Testament would split infinitives and dangle participles. And you can look at this, the phenomena of Scripture, and here, obviously, is the humanity of

the writer.

Now, if you only look at that, you come up with a human book. But there's another way to look at it, that is, what do they say about their own writing? What is the teaching of the book about itself? Well, I'm not going to listen to them. Well, why not? In any court case, the man on trial, if he is a man of integrity, is his own best witness.

And we allow that in any court. What does the Bible say about itself? Let's look at a couple of passages and get some of the implications. 2 Timothy, chapter 3. Now, here again, this is an authorized spokesman for our Lord, and Paul is not above presenting his credentials for claiming apostleship.

And this is an authorized spokesman of our Lord, talking about the Scripture in 2 Timothy, chapter 3. Verse 14, As for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. Now, Paul is here talking about the profitableness of the Bible.

In what areas is the Bible worthwhile? Well, he mentions two of them. It's the means of our salvation. Through the Scriptures, we came to faith in Jesus Christ.

We heard the message preached. It is secondly, profitable to equip the Christian who has already believed in Jesus Christ to do every good work. Now, why is it profitable? Because it's been inspired by God.

That's why it's profitable. Much as I enjoy Shakespeare, much as I enjoy poetry, much as I enjoy other literature, it doesn't do this, because it was inspired by God. That's why it doesn't do it.

And I can read Shakespeare to the non-Christians from now until Doomsday, and it's not going to convert anybody. Except in those passages where Shakespeare has given a message based on the Word of God. But that's because it comes out of Scripture.

Shakespeare in and of itself is not going to convert anybody. But the Word of God will. Because that has been inspired by God.

Now, what does he mean, inspired by God? Our English word, inspire, means to breathe in. To expire means to breathe out, and we use expire of death. The expression that Paul used here is that Scripture is God breathed, without it saying inspire or expire.

Our English word, inspire, may leave the wrong impression that God breathed into what was already written, and gave it canonical status and authoritativeness in the Christian life. Or I might get the idea that God breathed into the writers, and so we've got inspired Scripture. But that isn't what Paul is writing.

Paul is simply saying, Scripture is God breathed. Now, what does he mean by saying Scripture is God breathed? Well, go back to the 33rd Psalm. I think we can pick up the idiom if you've been thinking.

Verse 6. Psalm 33, verse 6. By the word of the Lord, the heavens were made, and all their hosts by the breath of his mouth. Now, without going into Hebrew poetry and its parallels, he's saying the same thing in a reverse order, in those two lines, just using different words, and that's characteristic of Hebrew poetry. What he is saying in Psalm 33 is that the universe is the product of the creative activity of God.

That creative activity is described in the second line of that poetry as the breath of God. And we could say, all creation is God breathed. That's just what the psalmist is saying.

And the parallel idea in a different sphere in 2 Timothy 3 is that all Scripture is God breathed. What does he mean about creation? God produced creation by his own activity. What is he saying about Scripture? God produced Scripture by his own activity.

It's God breathed. It is the product of God's work. All Scripture is God breathed.

Now, he's not saying how. There are these two things in Scripture. I see the phenomena of Scripture.

I see the clear marks of human evidence. There isn't any difficulty in picking out the personality of Paul by reading his writings. No, you're not going to get that in a letter from a secretary.

Or that's dictated by a secretary. You're not going to learn a thing about the secretary. Except maybe she can't spell and she can't type.

Or she can't spell and she can't type. You don't learn a thing about the secretary. But you learn a great deal about the boss.

Don't you? Then I learn a great deal about these men in their writing. What kind of men they were. And this tells me God did not dictate the Bible.

Just precisely how it was done, we don't know. We'll look at another passage in a moment that may help us. But all Paul is saying is that though these men wrote the Scriptures, the end product is the result of God's activity.

All Scripture is God breathed. 2 Peter chapter 1. The passage we've already been in toward the end of that chapter. 2 Peter chapter 1. Are you sure you didn't set that clock ahead again? Verse 16.

Oh no. It's a good thing I've got a clock. It's the same in the classroom.

You're always under that pressure. You've got to cut it off, boy. Say it and get out of there.

2 Peter 1 verse 16. We heard this voice born from heaven. For we were with him on the holy mountain.

And we have the prophetic word made more sure. Now, I don't like this revised translation, and I'll tell you why in a moment. We have the prophetic word made more sure.

You will do well to pay attention to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your heart. First of all, you must understand this. That no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation.

Because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man but men, moved by the Holy Spirit, take from God. Peter's saying this. We told you that Jesus Christ is coming again.

On what was that based? It was based on two things. The Scriptures of the Old Testament and our experience on the Mount of Transfiguration. We saw a foregleam of the second advent of Jesus Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration.

We were there. We weren't following some divine myth. We were following two things.

Our own eyewitness experience on the Mount of Transfiguration and the Old Testament Scriptures. Now, I think Peter is saying if push comes to shove, forget my experience and take the Old Testament Scriptures. And this is why I object to the translation.

We have the Scriptures, the prophetic word in verse 19 made more sure. Give me the translation that says we have a more sure word in the prophetic Scriptures. Another study I did that was most helpful was to take the writings of the apostles and see what they had to say about the Old Testament.

And I can't. After that study, I cannot imagine Peter ever saying my experience on the Mount of Transfiguration made the Old Testament more sure. If there's one thing these apostles were convinced of, it was the absolute authority and reliability of the Old Testament.

I just can't dream of Peter saying I had an experience that made it more sure. Peter says, over against my experience on the Mount of Transfiguration there's something more sure than that. And that's the Old Testament.

And this is the absolute reliability of Scripture. Why is it reliable? Because it didn't originate with man. That's why it didn't originate with man.

And Peter says, you've got to understand this in verse 23, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation. Now, the question is, what does he mean by interpretation? Does he mean how I interpret the passage? Does he mean I have to compare Scripture with Scripture? Well, if Peter's talking about how I interpret the Bible, it's all out of joint. This isn't the subject of this passage.

He's not talking about how I interpret Scripture, but about the reliability of Scripture. And it seems to me what Peter is saying, no Scripture originated with the interpretation of the promise. Let me give you an illustration.

If you go back to the book of Jeremiah, a captivity had already occurred, and a good number of Jews were down in Babylon. There were prophets in Babylon and there were prophets in Jerusalem who were going around telling everybody that within three years, the exiles are going to be restored to Jerusalem, and Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon are going to be all done. Well, Jeremiah says, Amen, brother.

I wish that were true, but it ain't. And Jeremiah got up and said, All you people here in Jerusalem are going into Babylon, into captivity. They're not going to join you.

You're going to join them. Now, here are two prophets looking at the same set of circumstances coming up with two different interpretations. Who's right? Well, history proved Jeremiah right, but God had nothing to say about that.

He said, These men have spoken out of their own hearts, not from the counsel of God. And it seems to me this is exactly what Peter is saying. The Scriptures we have were not the interpretation of the prophet looking out at circumstances and giving his views where they come from then.

Men moved by the Holy Spirit. And the word moved is carried along, not helped, carried along. I can help someone to walk, but that's a totally different thing from picking up my child and carrying the child.

And Peter says, These men were carried along by the Holy Ghost. That's how Scripture originates. It did not come from the thinking of men.

They sat down and surveyed the situation and said, Uh-huh, I think this is what's going to happen. And they wrote it in the prophets. Well, no.

God, by His Spirit, controlled the end product. Now, we just briefly had a touch on it. If you're interested, let me suggest a little bit of reading you might do.

Mr. Varsity puts out a very helpful little book called *Fundamentalism and the Word of God* by J.I. Packer. Available in paperback. Moody Press puts out a book called *Can I Trust My Bible?* that you might find helpful.

And if you're really interested in going into this thing and going at it hammer and tongue, get hold of the writings of B.B. Warfield, still published by the Presbyterian Reform Publishing Company in Philadelphia. You'll really get into the meat of it right there. B.B. Warfield.

Get hold of everything he wrote. Quite a few massive volumes, but get hold of the stuff. And there are various chapters in those volumes.

There's one on inspiration of the Bible. You'll get to the real meat of the stuff. That's suggested reading.

But now, if you agree with me, and you better agree, but if you agree with me, know this. There are a couple things that come out of this. We ought to be re-examining what we do in light of the Scripture.

Brethren, our tradition has absolutely no authority. And I don't quite care if you quote John Nelson Darby and C.H. Macintosh and William Kelly by the yard. They have to be evaluated in light of the Word of God.

That is the only authority. As much as I read here, and read some of these, and I can't read Darby. I can't make any detail out of that.

Kelly was a real New Testament scholar. But these are not the authority. The authority is the Word of God.

There are a couple of other implications that come out of this. We have got to submit to the Word of God in our own lives. We are denying the doctrine of inspiration if we disobey the authority of the Word of God.

There's no use in my professing a doctrine of inspiration that I deny with my life. There's a third thing that comes out of this. I'm going to make the statement with which Paul Little's father shot Jesus a few weeks ago.

Now, let me finish it out before you get up and leave. In the sight of God, now get this, in the sight of God, a vast knowledge of the Bible is of no more value than a vast accumulation of money. Knowing your Bible isn't worth too much.

And this, in either case, is what you do with it. That's the only thing that counts. God never told the Israelites to memorize the Ten Commandments.

He told them to obey them. And memorization is no substitute for obedience. I'll go further.

There is no blessing in knowing the Bible. I'm prepared to back that up in Scripture. There is no blessing in knowing the Bible.

If you learned something this afternoon, you were not blessed by learning it. Where does James tell us the blessing lies? That man shall be blessed in his doing, not in his knowing. And he warns us against being

hearers of the Word.

What did our Lord tell His disciples in the Upper Room Discourse? If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them. And we show our belief in the inspiration of Scripture, not by presenting what I presented to you this afternoon. I'm just trying to help some of our younger brethren get hold of a basis for saying the Bible is the Word of God.

But we don't show our faith in inspiration by repeating what I say. We show it by our personal submission to the authority of Jesus.

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