

From Grace Fellowship's Statement of Faith:

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is himself the focus of divine revelation.

- For the sake of this class, I'm going to assume that we all agree what the Bible actually is- the 66 books that make up the one book you all have in front of you. Of course, there are people who will contest that- they'll argue that the apocryphal books that were written between the time Malachi was finished and the New Testament began ought to be included. There are others who argue that the 66 books we have are just a product of politics and power games in the early church. The first time I taught a theology class, Dan Brown's book *The DaVinci Code* was still really popular and he argued that. Those are important question to work through for sure, especially if we're going to say our theology ought to be built exclusively on what is written in this book. We better make sure we have the right book! What I'm going to do is put up an article or two, as well as my notes from my research when I taught on this about ten years ago so you can look at that on your own time if you're interested in those questions. If you have any questions though after looking at that, ask them here and we'll discuss!
- We do need to understand how the Bible understands itself before we start building our doctrine. After all, our doctrine isn't just supposed to be a system of logical beliefs. We're saying we're going to live our whole life by these beliefs. When we want to do one thing, and we want to do it so badly, our heart longs for it, we are NOT going to do that thing, and we're going to choose to do what the Bible teaches instead because of our trust in the God of the Bible. That's a big deal. So we need to understand why we would do that. Is the Bible worth it? Well, if we understand our church's doctrinal statement correctly here, then it absolutely is.
- When we talk about the doctrine of Scripture here, we want to focus on three things- The Doctrines of Inspiration, Inerrancy, and Infallibility. We're going to look at the first one today, and the other two next week. These provide the basis for why we believe the other doctrines we do. Our Christian theology comes from the Bible, so what gives the Bible that level of importance.

Let's unpack the first part of that first sentence this week: *We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author...*

The Bible is God Himself Speaking to Us

- **The Old Testament**

- The giving of the tablets on Mt. Sinai marks a beautiful picture of God communicating directly with his people, through one individual, Moses, and putting it in written form.
- Deut. 18.18 – beginning of the practice of God speaking through the prophets. Ultimately, we find that this verse is fulfilled in Jesus Christ when He comes as the God/Man speaking the truth.
 - “Thus sayeth the Lord” passages
 - “speaking through” passages- 1 Kings 14.18, Jer. 37.2, Zech.7.2
- There are of course the direct appearances of God as well- to Abraham, at Mt. Sinai, the Burning Bush, to Joshua, to Elijah, to Job, etc.
- So we find that the Old Testament in many places recognizes that God is directly speaking to His people through the words written down.
 - Deut. 31.9-13/ Here we see the beginning of the written tradition of God's word. Why write it down though?
 - Accuracy throughout the generations
 - opportunity for repeated inspection
 - more accessible
- **The New Testament's Witness to the Old Testament**
 - 2 Peter 1.21- 'moved by the Holy Spirit.' These men were inspired to write down God's own words.
 - So, it was not dictation. God, instead, moved through these men, inspiring them as individuals to write his words through his guidance. How? Well, ultimate because He is God! But we know that the individuals who wrote did so in their own words, with their own emotions (ie- Lamentations, or Ecclesiastes). But Peter tells us that they were in fact writing exactly what the Holy Spirit was moving them to write. God is the ultimate author of this book.
 - Matthew 4.4- temptation of Jesus. Jesus writes that “every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” What is he referring to here? The Scriptures of the Old

Testament that He has used to counter the temptation of the devil.

- Another example from Christ is Matthew 19.5- He quotes Gen. 2 and attributes these words to God when the author of Genesis does not. Jesus recognizes that the narrator of Genesis is speaking the words of God here.
- Acts 1.16 – Here, Psalms 69 and 109 are attributed to the Holy Spirit speaking through David.
- Hebrews 1:1 - God spoke to our Fathers by the prophets
- 2 Timothy 3.16- this is one of the most significant passages for understanding what Scripture is, and why it is important.
 - Breathed out by God.
 - All Scripture- the word for scripture here is *graphe*, and it is used 51 times in the New Testament. In each and every case, it refers to the sacred Scriptures. This is, we can take it, a specialized term.

- **The New Testament's Witness To Itself As Scripture**

- The word *graphe* is crucial for understanding how the New Testament sees itself. Remember, it is a word that is used in the NT to always refer to the sacred writings. 51 out of 51 times.
 - 2 Peter 3.16- Peter refers here to Paul's writing and how some of it can be difficult to hear, but look at how he categorizes Paul's writing- with the other Scriptures. This is amazing. Here, even before the apostles have died they are recognizing that part of the ministry of the Holy Spirit during this time was to add to the sacred Scriptures *and they were recognizing what those Scriptures were*. We'll mention this again next week when we talk about how we know which books belong in the New Testament, but suffice it to say, Peter is equating Paul's writings that were circulating around with Scripture. God was speaking through Paul.
 - 1 Timothy 5.18- Here we have Paul quoting two passages. The first is from the Old Testament, clearly from Scripture. But where is the second quote that he is quoting from? It's not in the Old Testament anywhere. He is quoting Luke 10.7 where Jesus says this exact statement! Word for word. Paul is quoting Luke's account of the Gospel as Scripture. Again,

this is helpful to us as we see New Testament apostles declaring that God was, in their day, speaking through them and adding to the canon. That's why we have a New Testament.

- Other examples of New Testament being sacred scripture
 - 1 Corinthians 14.37
 - John 14.26 and 16.13 show the Holy Spirit's role in the creation of the New Testament. John is showing that God will be working to create His book through the New Testament writers in the same way He did the Old Testament
 - Revelation 22.18-19/ I don't think it is an accident that this passage was written in the book that had to be the last book of the Bible. It had to be because of its content- the future return and victory of Christ. So, knowing that God is the author of the entire Bible, we should take it that this warning is definitely for the book of Revelation, but that it is also for the entirety of Scripture. God has spoken, and is still speaking today *through these 66 books*.
- **So, the conclusion?** The Bible clearly testifies about itself that it is God speaking to His creation. These words are God's words! What are the implications of that?
- What then, can we say about why we need the Bible? It is the words of God revealed to us. It is the truth. Everything in it is true because God cannot lie. There are several implications of this for us but we'll just end with one this week, and we'll pick up on some of the others after we look at the rest of the statement next week, and think about fun words like inerrancy and infallibility. .
- It has Authority
 - "All the words in Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God." (Grudem's Systematic Theology)
 - "The Scriptures are a complete guide to what we must believe as well as all the information we need for service and holy living. There is also imponderable, mysterious power in the scriptures, when read in the vernacular language of any people, and made known by preaching and teaching. That power will convert and reform individuals while also improving and refining their morals, manners, economy and material culture. Such is the power in the Bible, the written Word of

God.” -Robert Duncan Culver, *Systematic Theology*

- This is God telling us how we are to live, what we are to do, what our goals are in life. Perfectly telling us this. There are things we choose to do, knowing that they go against the Scriptures, but we justify it by various things- well, I’m going through this. These people did this to me. You don’t understand. But it’s very clarifying, and convicting, to realize that the simple truth is we are to obey the Bible. If we don’t, even for reasons, it’s simply disobedience.
- “The Law organized their lives, shaped their worship, protected their hearts, structured their relationships with their neighbors, and provided a legal system... As any loving parent would, God the Father, in his Word, sets boundaries of protection for us. He does not do that to rob us of our freedom and joy, but so that we would be freed from the bondage and sadness that always result when sinners choose their own way.” Paul Tripp, *Do You Believe?* , pg. 52.