

GOD'S WORD AND GOD'S MAN.

THE BIBLE AND THE MINISTER. 2 Tim. 3:14-17.

*The Scriptures illuminated by the Holy Spirit are a necessary and effectual means of grace for sinful man.*

"Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?"  
Thirty-seven years ago, on the sacred occasion of my ordination to the gospel ministry, I answered this question in the affirmative. Today I continue to affirm in no uncertain terms this fundamental belief. I believe in the full verbal inspiration of the Bible, ~~and the necessity of the Bible as a means of grace to sinful men.~~ For my personal salvation I receive and rest upon the Living Word, who is the heart and center of the Bible. The true minister of the gospel, for the fulfillment of his high mission must handle aright this word of truth, he must abide in the word, and he must preach the word.

### 1. The Bible is God-breathed.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." It is "the product of the creative breath of God---God's breath is the irresistible outflow of His power." Not only does the apostle Paul in this his swan song to the young minister, Timothy, state clearly the fact of the divine origin of all Scripture, but the apostle Peter also, in his second letter, chapter one, verses 19-21, states the fact of the divine inspiration of scripture and tells something of how it was produced. Our child's catechism states the truth simply in answer to the question, "Who wrote the Bible?" "Holy men of old who were taught by the Holy Spirit." Our Confession of Faith states that "the scriptures, being immediately inspired of God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic."

Yet the good question may be asked, "How may we know what writings make up the divinely inspired scriptures?" To this our Confession makes this good answer: "The canon of scripture is not established by explicit passages, but by the testimony of Jesus and His apostles; of ancient manuscripts and versions; of ancient Christian writers and church councils, and by the internal evidence exhibited in the separate books." It has been well said that "the scriptures by their own weight crushed all rivals out of existence."

Unbelief in the divine origin and the divine authority of the Word of God was first revealed in the garden of Eden when Satan said to Eve, "Yea, hath God said". This denial reaches international proportions today in the rejection by many of the supernatural origin of the Bible. If a minister of the gospel is to effectively fulfill his ministry it is most fundamental that he have a firm belief in the divine inspiration of scripture.

Yet the question may be asked, "How may one have the full persuasion and assurance of the supernatural origin of the Bible?" Here again our Confession makes this good answer: "We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church to an high and reverent esteem for the Holy Scripture; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the word of God; yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward word of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts."

"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord  
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word;  
What more can He say than to you He hath said,  
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"

## 2. The Bible is Christ-centered.

The Bible is not only divinely inspired, but it is also Christ-centered. In the heart of the Bible is the old, old story of Jesus and His love. This wonderful story, continuing from Genesis to Revelation, is told by some 40 authors, over a period of about 1500 years.

The Living Christ, on His resurrection day, touched the Messianic heart of the Old Testament, when "beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." Our first parents, ruined in the fall, were the hearers of the first gospel, according to Genesis 3:15, in which the seed of the woman was promised to bruise the serpent's head. The whole Bible is largely an exposition of this first gospel promise. As this good news is further unfolded revealing particularly its missionary aspect, Abraham, the father of the faithful, hears it as God says to him, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Moses in Egypt sees symbolized in the blood of the lamb the sacrifice of the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world, while the blood of the covenant at Sinai foreshadows the blood of the new covenant, poured out for many for the remission of sins. David in the poetry of the Psalms sings of the Messiah King and of His everlasting kingdom. The gospel according to Isaiah, particularly chapter 53, considered by many the greatest chapter in the Old Testament, foretells in most vivid description, the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. The Risen Christ himself gives a summary of the Messianic heart of the Old Testament when He says, "Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the nations beginning from Jerusalem."

The evangel of the four gospels is "concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which he was received up." Four concurrent views of the same Matchless Christ are here presented. Matthew's is the gospel of the King, with the appeal, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Mark emphasizes Jesus as servant, suffering and sacrificial. "For the Son of man also came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Luke, the beloved physician, portrays Jesus particularly in his humanity, as the perfect Man. "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." John, the beloved disciple, emphasizes the Deity of Jesus, He who was in the beginning, and with God, and was God. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." The very heart of the heart of the gospel is that golden text of the Bible, John 3:16. This is the pioneer verse on the mission fields of the world, as the pioneer song is "Jesus loves me, this I know, For the Bible tells me so."

From the book of Acts on to the end of the Bible we have the apostolic message in all its fulness, the Spirit having led the writers into "all the truth."

Listen to Peter at Pentecost—what a gospel message in all its fulness!

Read Paul's master thesis on the subject of salvation in the book of Romans.

Hear him as he summarizes the gospel in these words to the Corinthian church:

"For I delivered unto you first of all, that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures."

Read on thru to the book of Revelation—the gospel of the crowned Christ, the final message from the throne of God, proclaiming victory thru our Lord Jesus Christ.

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever."

Here then, in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament is to be found a complete, unified, glorious gospel for a lost world. Of these scriptures Jesus said, "These are they which bear witness of me."

### 3. The Bible is Indispensable as a Means of Grace.

That great Bible teacher of sainted memory, Dr. W.W. White, has said, "Do not fall into the error of the Jews to whom our Lord said, 'Ye search the scriptures because ye think that in them ye have eternal life, and ye will not come unto me that ye may have life.' The scriptures are not an end, but a means. To study them is not an act of piety, but should be an aid to piety. Their appointed mission is to lead to Christ, to build up in Christ, and to send out for Christ." We may well make the prayer of the hymn which says,

"Beyond the sacred page, I seek Thee, Lord,  
My spirit pants for Thee, O Living Word."

The scriptures "are able to make us wise unto salvation thru faith which is in Christ Jesus." Without these scriptures we cannot be wise unto salvation. The necessity of Holy Scripture is eloquently expressed as follows in the first paragraph of our Confession of Faith: "Although the light of nature, and the work of creation and providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of ~~salvation~~ God, and of His will, which is necessary unto salvation; therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners to reveal himself and to declare that his will unto his church; and afterwards for the better preserving and propagating the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing, which maketh the holy scripture to be most necessary, those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased."

Not only are the scriptures necessary as a means of grace for sinful men, but they give us all things that are necessary. Our Confession continues by stating that "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in scripture or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced therefrom; unto which nothing at any time is to be added whether by new revelation or by the traditions of men. Nevertheless we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in His Word." Hence in the words of the Shorter Catechism: "The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners and building them up in holiness and comfort thru faith unto salvation."

Paul wrote to the Corinthian church: "But as it is written, Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, And which entered not into the heart of man, Whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him. But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God."-- "Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged."

While the Bible is indispensable as a means of grace, the Holy Spirit is indispensable to make this means of grace an effectual means. This God-breathed and Christ-centered Bible must be Spirit-illuminated.

"The Spirit breathes upon the Word, And brings the truth to light;  
Precepts and promises afford, A sanctifying light."

### 4. Three Imperatives for God's Man -

Here then is a book that is God-breathed and Christ-centered, and thru the Spirit's illumination is able to make us wise unto salvation. "The entrance of Thy Word giveth light. It giveth understanding to the simple." What must be the relation of the gospel minister to such a book? Assuming that he has answered in the affirmative his ordination vow with reference to the Bible he may do well to hear and heed three imperatives given by the apostle Paul to the young minister,

Timothy. First, ~~Handle~~ <sup>Handle</sup> aright the word of truth; second, ~~Abide~~ <sup>Abide</sup> in the word; and third, ~~Preach~~ <sup>Preach</sup> the word.

1) "Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth," or "holding a straight course in the word of truth." The original word here translated "handling aright" means literally "cutting stones square to fit". That is what the approved workman does who is not ashamed of his work. First of all, the word of truth must be handled, not left untouched. And the man of God must handle aright the sacred scriptures. He must not do as many "corrupting the word of God." Much of the modern use of the Bible is a misuse of the Bible, which is ancient as well as modern. In the time of Christ the devil misused scripture, taking it out of its context, and out of its relation to the whole revelation. An excellent way to hold a straight wellbalanced course in the word of truth is to follow what our Confession of Faith calls "the infallible rule of interpretation of scripture," which is scripture itself.

The best commentary on the scripture is the inspired commentary - *The Bible itself*.

2) A second imperative is "Abide in the word of God." "But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and been assured of". The word "abide" here means "to live in", "to take up one's residence in". We do well to remember that a minister should know his Bible better than any other book. A great educator ~~said~~ <sup>said</sup>, "A knowledge of the Bible without a college education is better than a college education without a knowledge of the Bible." In John 8:31-32 we find these words: "Jesus therefore said to those Jews that believed on him, If ye abide in my word, then ye are my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Again He said to his disciples in that memorable farewell address: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you." His words abiding in His disciples is a condition of unqualified answer to prayer.

3) A third imperative is "Preach the Word." Paul gives this admonition with emphasis. The commission of the Risen Christ was, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." The apostle Paul said, We preach not ourselves, but Christ <sup>Jesus</sup> as Lord." ~~Again He said~~ <sup>Again He said</sup> Again Paul said, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel; not in wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made void. For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us who are saved it is the power of God." When the word of the cross is preached men are won from sin unto God.

#### 5. A Famine or a Revival?

In Old Testament times, thru the prophet Amos, a famine in the land was threatened. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord Jehovah, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of Jehovah."

Is such a famine threatened in our world today?

- If we could look behind man-made curtains of barriers today, would we not see vast areas of the world's population where there is a famine of the word of God?
- If we would look into the homes of many of our own people we would find the Bible, yes, beautifully bound copies, but <sup>never</sup> ~~never~~ opened - a famine of the word right in our midst.
- In the pulpits of some Christian churches, alas!, there is a famine of the word of God, which spreads into the hearts of the members of the congregation. Instead of the word they are fed upon perhaps politics, or social or industrial matters, or science, or education - not upon the word of the cross, no word of the Christian hope, while precious souls are <sup>starving</sup> ~~starving~~ for the Bread of Life, famishing for the Water of Life.
- Once more, even in the theological seminary, when the curriculum is not Bible-centric, when other subjects, good in themselves, or duties, important and urgent though they be, crowd out the word of God. Yes, a famine of the word is threatened today.

Many years ago the Korean church was aptly described as a New Testament church. A main reason was that it was a church with a Pentecost. Dr. George Paik has described the Korean Revival of 1907 as "the spiritual rebirth of the Korean church." A means particularly blessed of God in bringing about that rebirth, along with that of united prayer, was Bible study. The Korean church became a Bible reading, Bible studying, a Bible loving, a Bible doing church. Our prayer is that this church many continue to be increasingly a New Testament church. May its ministers say from the heart with the apostles of old: "It is not fit that we should forsake the word of God and serve tables - But we will continue steadfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the Word."

*Make thy church, dear Savior, a land of purest gold. To thee before the nations, the true light of old. O lead thy wandering pilgrims, by this their path to trace, yon clouds and darkness ended, they see thee face to face.*