

1. We believe the Bible is the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God; and in the verbal inspiration of the original scriptures.

(Transcript of message preached by Pastor Rick Minett on March 6, 2005 at Grace Community Church)

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether" (Psalm 19:7-9).

The French Philosopher, Voltaire, was one of the most outspoken atheists of his day. He told a friend, "It took twelve ignorant fishermen to establish Christianity; I will show the world how one Frenchman can destroy it." He openly criticized anyone making statements using the Bible as their authority. For instance, Sir Isaac Newton made a prediction based on Daniel 12:4 (which says the time would come when men would run to and fro) and Nahum 2:4 (which talks about chariots raging through the streets). He predicted that man would someday be able to travel at the speed of 40 miles per hour. In response, Voltaire said, "See what a fool Christianity makes an otherwise brilliant man, such as Sir Isaac Newton. Doesn't he know that if man traveled 40 miles an hour, he would suffocate and his heart would stop?" But the fool turned out to be Voltaire, not Sir Isaac Newton. And the Bible that he pledged to destroy continues to change the hearts of men and women around the world. And ironically, when Voltaire died his home was purchased by the Geneva Bible Society and Voltaire's own printing press was then used to print copies of the Bible. Men like Voltaire have come and gone through the ages, but the Bible lives on. Matter of fact, Jesus clearly states that it will never pass away. *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away"* (Mark 13:31). And why is that? Consider the following.

The Bible Is Inspired

I've always marveled at those who are able to weave incredible yarns of fiction. It's one thing to write a biography because you have a great deal of facts to use as your foundation, but to come up with these fascinating stories only from one's imagination is pretty creative to say the least. Some people think the various writers of the Bible must have been creative men with wild imaginations, but nothing could be further from the truth. They didn't have to be creative. In a very real sense, they were nothing more than secretaries because the Bible says these men did not write on their own, but they wrote only as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:21 says, *"For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."* In 2 Timothy 3:16, the Apostle Paul writes, *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."* In the original Greek, the term "inspiration" literally means "God-breathed." The various authors of the books of the Bible wrote from their experiences and through their own personalities, that's true. However, they only wrote as they were inspired and empowered by God as He revealed His word to them. Or as Paul would say, "As God breathed on them to write." That is why Jesus, when He was tempted in the wilderness by Satan, told him, *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"* (Matthew 4:4).

I moved to Texas in 1980 and had to adjust to some of the terminology. We didn't say "fixin" and "reckon" back in Cincinnati, so I had to learn a new language. And this is no knock on Texas, because we say some strange things in the Midwest like "okie-dokey." In the Midwest, we say "pop" when we want a soft-drink. When I first moved to Texas and walked into a little diner and said, "I'd like a pop," the guy looked at me like I was crazy. And then he doubled up his fist! I guess he figured if I wanted a pop, he'd have to give me one. Not long thereafter, someone asked me if I wanted a "soda" and I said, "You've got to be kidding me." I thought they were offering me a glass of carbonization. When I lived in Florida, everything was called a "coke." If you wanted Dr. Pepper it was called a "coke." If you wanted 7Up it was called a "coke."

Now I say all that to say this: God used human authors to convey His words to us. And in using human authors, he chose to use their language, their style, and even their background and life's experiences to give us His Word. Some writer might use the term "soda" and some "pop" and some "coke," but none of that changes the fact that it is inspired by God. Both the Holy Spirit and human beings were involved in the writing of Scripture, but the critical element was the Holy Spirit. His presence ensured that what was written was wholly and completely true and untainted by human persuasion.

Some people accept bits and pieces of the Bible. For instance, Thomas Jefferson removed every verse from his Bible that referred to the supernatural. Some folks believe parts of the Bible are inspired and that other parts are not. But I struggle with that kind of thinking simply because I'm not sure how one would determine which part is inspired and which part is not.

Just think about it...Bible researchers have counted more than 3,800 times when the various authors of the books of the Bible used this phrase or something similar to it: *"The Word of the Lord came to me, saying..."* Just think about it...How can a book be written by 42 different authors over a period of 2,000 years in four different languages about nearly every subject known to man and yet still be in perfect harmony—unless it is inspired? How can a book be written in two major parts spanning 2,000 years—each dependent on the other—unless it is inspired? The Old can't bear fruit without the New and the New has no foundation without the Old. That tells me that we must either believe the Bible is fully and completely inspired or that none of it is. I choose to believe that it is, because the Bible declares it and because history validates it!

The Bible Is Infallible

That means the Bible will never deceive us, never lead us astray and never let us down. It is completely trustworthy and completely reliable. It's the sure and steadfast foundation of our Christian faith. It's the wheel within the wheel—everything rotates around it. I read about a man who was watching a building being constructed across the street from his office. After they laid the concrete slab, they brought in a huge, heavy silver box and set it down in the middle of the slab. And then they began to frame the building, put up sheetrock, etc. None of it made sense to him until he found out what was being built. It was a bank. Then it all made sense! The huge silver box was the vault. Because of its size, weight, and importance they had to build everything around it. Had they waited until construction was complete it would have never fit through the doors. So the lesson is pretty obvious: When you build a bank, you start with the vault, the instrument that holds the things of great value, and then you build around it. I want to suggest that what a vault is to a bank, the Bible is to the Church. Its pages hold our greatest possessions—the Word of God to mankind—and it must also be the starting point which everything else in our lives is built around. If we try to shove it in later, it may not fit through the door that we've constructed.

Has anyone close to you ever failed you? If you've lived more than a few days, the answer is "yes." People that love us fail us, even when they desperately try not to do so. But they do because they are comprised of flesh and blood. Presidents fail us. Preachers fail us. Politicians fail us. Programs fail us. Cars fail us! Houses fail us! Computers fail us! And on and on the list goes. But there's one thing that will never fail us and that is this gift from God to mankind called the Bible. Psalm 119:160 declares, *"The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever."* Isaiah 40:8 says, *"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of God stands forever."*

Remember the leisure suits of the mid-70s? I had a baby-blue leisure suit, 100% polyester of course. I wore a brightly flowered Hawaiian shirt under it; along with a white belt and white shoes. I was cool! I loved leisure suits! I loved them because they were comfortable, and most of all, because you could wear one and be considered "dressed up" without having to wear a necktie. But sadly, leisure suits didn't stand the test of time. Most things don't!

But the Bible does. What it said thousands of years ago about marriage is still true today. What it said thousands of years ago about worship is still true today. What it said thousands of years ago about prophecy is still true today. This book stands the test of time! Harry Rimmer, the noted archeologist said, "The Bible is a book by which men live successfully and die triumphantly. It needs no help from scholars and asks no aid from science. In all things and in every generation it is sufficient unto itself; and it has an abundant contribution to make to every mental and spiritual need of man." And the reason it has an abundant contribution to make to the needs of the human race is because it is both inspired and infallible.

The Bible is Authoritative

The writer to the Hebrews spoke of the absolute authority of this book when he wrote these words in Hebrews 4:12, *"For the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."* Think about it—is there any other book that can make such a claim?

This solitary book has erected empires and cast others down. Those who have wholly followed its precepts have been blessed; while those who have rejected it have been cursed. Throughout history it has been burned, banned, ridiculed, distorted, abused and outlawed; but never destroyed and it can never be ignored! It's simply too powerful for that. It's authoritative!

Psalm 19, in my personal opinion, speaks more clearly about the authority and power of this Word than any other passage in the Bible. In three little verses, we are given six titles for scripture, six characteristics of scripture, and six effects of scripture. The titles are the law of the Lord, the testimony of the Lord, the statutes of the Lord, the commandment of the Lord, the fear of the Lord, and the judgments of the Lord. The characteristics are that it is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true. And the effects include that it converts the soul, makes simple people wise, causes the heart to rejoice, enlightens the eyes, endures forever, and it produces righteousness.

Verse 7 says, *"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul..."* This book, God's law, is perfect. But the original word used here doesn't mean "perfect" as compared to "imperfect," but rather "perfect" as compared to "incomplete." One Hebrew scholar defined it this way: "All sided, so as to completely cover all aspects of something." In other words, the Bible is consummate, comprehensive and complete. Nothing can be added and nothing can be taken away from it.

Verse 7 continues, *"The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple..."* Do you want to know about God? Then go to this book because the Bible is God's personal testimony. It truly is the "divine disclosure." It's from the Lord—about the Lord. And this testimony is sure. It's reliable, trustworthy; something you can take to the bank. And notice what it does? It makes simple people wise. It opens the door to understanding and equips a person in all manner of living.

Verse 8 says, *"The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart..."* This book is the statutes, precepts and principles for life that should form our value system. And why is that? It's because they are "right." They put us on the "right path." Why do we need help finding the right path? Proverbs 16:25 says, *"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."* It "seems" right, but it's wrong—dead wrong! This book tells us how to walk, and when we walk in it, our heart will rejoice. The bottom line is this: When you follow the path of this book, when you live according to its principles and precepts, your life is going to be filled with joy.

Verse 8 continues by saying, *"The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."* Sometimes we suggest, at least by the way we live; that the Bible is filled with "suggestions" from the Lord. It's not. It's filled with "commandments of the Lord"—commandments that are pure and clear. It's like those night vision glasses that soldiers use in war. When it's dark and one can't see, one can put on a pair

of these glasses and magically see in the dark. There are so many "dark things" in life, that I need help seeing. I need something to turn on the light and make things clear. That's what the Bible does.

Verse 9 goes on to say, "*The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever...*" The Bible produces faith, but at times, it produces fear. And a healthy fear is a good thing, not a bad thing. What keeps you from trying to walk across a freeway during rush hour? A healthy fear! The Psalmist says that this kind of fear is "clean." It doesn't stain, it doesn't spot, and it doesn't leave a blemish. It can be totally trusted and it endures forever! And then verse 9 concludes by saying, "*The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.*" God is the judge of all the earth and this book tells of His judgments. His judgments are absolute truth.

If you are old enough you remember the hippie generation, flower children, the peace sign, and so forth. That generation said they were searching for truth. But the next generation came along and wore a T-Shirt that said, "Personally, I've abandoned my search for truth." So many people don't even know what truth is anymore. We have a whole culture wandering about trying to figure out what truth is. Not to sound presumptuous, but I can tell you about truth. I can tell you the truth about time and eternity; the truth about the origin of the world and how it's going to end; the truth about morality, life, love, relationships, marriage, etc.

How can I do that? It's because I have this book that is filled with the judgments of God—and they are true! That's why, when Jesus prayed His high priestly prayer in the Garden, He didn't ask His Father to take His disciples out of the world, but instead He said, "*Sanctify them by Your truth. Your Word is truth.*" And what does this truth produce? Comprehensive righteousness! This is a book... (1) That totally transforms the whole inner person. (2) That makes us skilled in all manner of living. (3) That gives us complete and absolute joy. (4) That enlightens our eyes so that we can see through the dark into the light. (5) That is relevant to every culture, every time, every person, in every circumstance. (6) That produces comprehensive rightness with God.

In 1947, in a small parcel of land located between Bethlehem and the west shore of the Dead Sea, a young Arab boy named Muhammad was tending to his sheep. While chasing a stray among the high, steep cliffs he noticed several caves. One was big enough for him to crawl into, so like most boys, his curiosity got the best of him. He threw a rock in the cave, but instead of hearing the expected dull thump, he heard the crackling sound of breaking pottery. When he went in, he found it was loaded with tall, cylinder-shaped jars. At first he ran away in fear, but later he returned with a friend, and when they opened the jars they found linen and leather scrolls written in a language neither one of them could read. Muhammad kept three of the scrolls and carried them with him as he tended his flocks. Matter of fact, he almost sold them to a local cobbler who wanted to buy them to make some shoes.

Thankfully he didn't. News spread of his find; news that would rock the historical, educational, and religious communities of the world. This young boy had stumbled upon the oldest Bible manuscripts ever found, dating back a hundred years before Christ. Of course, we know them today as the "Dead Sea Scrolls." The sad paradox of this story is that Muhammad never realized the value of what he had stumbled upon. He continued to live in relative poverty after making one of the most important historical discoveries in modern times. Even sadder is the fact that this paradox persists today. People will plod along like this shepherd boy, living in self-imposed spiritual poverty, totally unaware that this book that sits unopened and ignored on their bookshelf is the very book that can and will transform their life. That's why I believe in the Bible; that's why I believe that it is the inspired, infallible, authoritative Word of God. It's the only thing that can totally transform the inner man. And maybe that's why the Psalmist reaches this conclusion in verse 10 of Psalm 19: "*More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.*"