

FOUNDATION OF FAITH!
THE BIBLE
DOES IT REALLY MATTER?
PART 1

As we continue on in our series, Foundation of Faith, we are going to be looking at the Bible. Again, I believe this is an important foundational truth that we need to understand, that we need to be clear on or we are going to become confused and instead of having a biblical worldview, we will have a worldly view of things and that is very dangerous. In fact, that is what we see happening in the church today because we have pastors, teachers telling their congregations that the Bible is not the infallible, inerrant, authoritative Word of God, it just contains the Word of God. They are telling people that we really don't know what the words mean. They are telling people that these are just stories that have some kind of spiritual truth. And as they do this, as they denigrate and belittle, as they put down the Word of God, people end up not believing what God has said anymore.

Now some of you may be thinking, "What's the big deal?" It truly is a big deal folks and I can't stress this enough. Without the authority of the Scriptures guess what you have? You have the authority of man and thus, man makes the rules, man tells you what you can and can't do, and man tells us the way to God, the way to heaven! And so, let me ask you again, is this a big deal! You bet it is!

And it truly all boils down to this. A church that is without the authority of the Scriptures, a church that negates that the Scriptures are the Word of God is like a crocodile without teeth. You see, it can open its mouth wide and it can open its mouth often, but who really cares! Don't take the teeth away from God's Word; don't negate what God has said. And the truth of the matter is this. I think that is why the church today can make all kinds of noise, but no one really seems to care because the church has negated the Word of God and thus, the world does not want to hear them anymore because there is no authority in what they are saying, they have lost their teeth!

Let me show you what I mean in regards to the Bible being important. I just want to share with you what Americans are involved in and the reason we see these immoral activities going on is we have moved away from the authority of the Scripture and thus, we not only see this in the world, but we see these activities going on in the Church as well!

First of all, look at marriages today. Did you know that marriages formed today have about a 41 to 43 percent chance of ending in divorce? They do! According to the statistics from 2010, approximately 50 percent of married women and 60 percent of married men will have an extramarital affair at some time in their marriage. That is an amazing number and a very sad number. And think about this for a minute. A University of California study in 1998 reported that 24 percent of men and 14 percent of women had had sex outside their marriages. In only a little over 10 years, those numbers have more than doubled!

What about abortions in this country? How many abortions have occurred in the United States since legalization in 1973? It's estimated that around one million abortions take place annually and more than 48 million abortions have been performed in the U.S. since 1973 (based on accumulative data from the two primary sources of U.S. abortion statistics – Centers for Disease Control and Alan Guttmacher Institute).

Not only that but according to the CDC report, in 2007:

41 percent women who had abortions in the U.S. had no other children.

44 percent of women who had abortions in the U.S. had at least one previous abortion.

83 percent of women who had abortions in the U.S. were unmarried.

Almost half (49%) of abortions are among women and teens 24-years old and younger.

And there is more! According to the Guttmacher Institute, the research arm of the nation's leading abortion seller, Planned Parenthood:

If things continue as they are, at the current rates, an estimated 1/3 of American women will have an abortion by the age of 45! We are losing generations of children!

Then there is homosexuality and the push by many today to see it as a normal lifestyle. In fact, for the first time in Gallup's tracking of the issue, a majority of Americans (53%) believe same-sex marriage should be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages. Those are 2011 statistics! Now think about that for a minute. If some 85 to 90% of Americans consider themselves as Christians, how can they say that homosexuality is a normal lifestyle and should have the same rights as traditional marriages? We will see why in a minute, but you probably already know the answer to that one!

And with the introduction of the Internet, look at the proliferation of pornography that has taken place! As of 2003, there were 1.3 million pornographic websites; 260 million pages (N2H2, 2003). The total porn industry revenue for 2006: \$13.3 billion in the United States; \$97 billion worldwide (Internet Filter Review). The U.S. adult DVD/video rentals in 2005: almost 1 billion (Adult Video News). Hotel viewership for adult films: 55% (cbsnews.com). Adults admitting to Internet sexual addiction: 10%; 28% of those are women (Internet Filter Review). More than 70% of men from 18 to 34 visit a pornographic site in a typical month (comScore Media Metrix).

And it is truly tragic as we see this affecting our children, not only viewing these sights, but becoming part of them! There are more than 20,000 images of child pornography posted online every week (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 10/8/03). Approximately 20% of all Internet pornography involves children (National Center for Mission & Exploited Children). There are 100,000 websites that offer illegal child pornography (U.S. Customs Service estimate). As of December 2005, child pornography was a \$3 billion annual industry (Internet Filter Review).

And this is affecting the church as well. A 1996 Promise Keepers survey at one of their stadium events revealed that over 50% of the men in attendance were involved with pornography within one week of attending the event!

And we are not only speaking of adults that are viewing these sights. Because of the Internet, the largest consumer of Internet pornography: 12 - 17 year-old age group (various sources, as of 2007).

You see, never before in the history of telecommunications media in the United States has so much indecent (and obscene) material been so easily accessible by so many minors in so many American homes with so few restrictions.

In regards to sexual perversion, this article by Gene Veith is scary. It is called, “Tossing the last taboo” and it was in World Magazine from April 10, 1999. We are told:

“First, the culture began to see premarital sex as the norm. Then homosexuality became culturally respectable. The next taboo targeted for overthrow by our sexual revolutionaries evidently is sex between adults and children.” - Gene Veith

Back in 2004 an article was published in the American Psychological Association’s flagship publication, the APA Psychological Bulletin, arguing that sex between adults and children is not intrinsically bad or harmful but can actually be beneficial to some individuals later in life. . . . It was concluded that if the encounter is consensual and enjoyed, sex between adults and children is not harmful at all. In light of these findings, negative terms such as “abuse,” “molestation,” and “victims’ should be replaced by values-neutral phrases like “adult-child sex.”

In 1973 the APA removed homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses and in 1998 ruled that psychologists should not try to help homosexuals change their behavior or orientation, even if the patient wants to change. . . . Bauserman has written other apologetics for pedophilia, including one article in which he claimed that men who counseled troubled adolescent boys could achieve “miracles not by preaching to them, but by sleeping with them.” He noted in another article that parents should treat pedophiles as “partners” in their child’s upbringing. If Bauserman has his way, child molestation will be the next perversion to receive society’s blessing.

I don't think we realize how the times have changed because we have buried our heads in the sand and we don't want to look! I will just share with you how quickly; just in 40 years things have changed. You have probably heard of this before, but it does drive home the point! Listen carefully to the top disciplinary problems faced by teachers in the classroom back in 1940. They were:

- Talking
- Chewing gum
- Making noise
- Running in the halls
- Wearing improper clothing
- Not putting wastepaper in the wastebasket

Then, in the 1980's educators were asked the same question by college researchers.

The top disciplinary problems for teachers in the 1980's were:

- Rape
- Robbery
- Assault
- Burglary
- Arson
- Bombings
- Murder

Can you imagine where we are today in 2011! We live in a society where people are calling good evil and evil good. People don't know or they just don't want to know what is right and what is wrong. Why is that? Because Paul said that this would take place in the last days where people are lovers of themselves and whatever satisfies them is right, no matter how deviant their behavior is! They have no standard anymore, whatever feels good, they do!

U.S. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan published a disturbing essay entitled "Defining Deviancy Down." In the November 22, 1993 issue of *The New Republic*, Commentator Charles Krauthammer writes "Moynihan's powerful point is that with the moral deregulation of the 1960s, we have had an explosion of deviancy in family life, criminal behavior and public displays of psychosis. And we have dealt with it in the only way possible: by redefining deviancy down so as to explain away and make 'normal' what a more civilized, ordered and healthy society long ago would have labeled – and long ago did label – deviant."

In Charles Swindoll's book, The Quest for Character, we are told, "sociologist and historian Carle Zimmerman, in his 1947 book Family and Civilization, recorded his keen observations as he compared the disintegration of various cultures with the parallel decline of family life in those cultures. Eight specific patterns of domestic behavior typified the downward spiral of each culture Zimmerman studied: Marriage loses its sacredness . . . is frequently broken by divorce; traditional meaning of the marriage ceremony is lost; feminist movements abound; there is increased public disrespect for parents and authority in general; an acceleration of juvenile delinquency, promiscuity and rebellion occurs; there is refusal of people with traditional marriages to accept family responsibilities; a growing desire for, and acceptance of, adultery is evident; there is increasing interest in, and spread of, sexual perversions and sex-related crimes."

And you can agree with me or you can disagree with me on this, but I feel the reason for the decline in our morality is that we have moved away from the Word of God, that we have moved away from the inerrancy and infallibility of the Word of God which has lead us to do whatever we want. If it feels good, do it mentality! You see, the Bible tells us that marriage is a covenant that is made between a man and a woman, not a man and a man or a woman and a woman. The Bible tells us that marriage is till death do we part and that does not mean you can kill your spouse! The Bible tells us that sex outside the marriage relationship is a sin! The Bible tells us that sexual perversion, pornography is a sin. The Bible tells us that life is a gift of God and to end it is murder, and abortion is the murder of an unborn child, not a piece of tissue!

You see, we do have a standard and it is the Word of God. And yes, our nation was never occupied by all Christians, far from it, but they did follow the Word of God, the principles that God laid out in His Word and it affected the way they lived. We have moved away from that and thus, people do all kinds of immoral activity and they don't think twice about it because they have no standard to live by!

And yes, individuals are responsible for their actions, but I also blame the church because we have moved away from the Word of God and now we are reaping what we have sown! Rick Warren, who has been called "America's Pastor", is teaching us through his Purpose Driven books and programs, that evangelical Christianity is on a path to a second "reformation" and a great spiritual awaking. Listen carefully to what he is saying, what he means:

"I believe that we are possibly on the verge of a new reformation in Christianity and another Great Awakening in our nation . . . The signs are everywhere, including the popularity of this book."

In an interview, Warren stated:

"I'm looking for a second reformation. The first reformation of the church 500 years ago was about beliefs. This one is going to be about behavior. The first one was about creeds. This one is going to be about deeds. It is not going to be about what does the church believe, but about what is the church doing."

Now as great as that may sound, if you move away from doctrine, you are in danger of believing false doctrine. Yes, we are to do good works, but good works are born out of sound Biblical teaching and not apart from it because apart from Christ, there is nothing we can do that He will accept!

And as you listen to what leaders in the Church are saying today, they are negating the Word of God and thus, we have a generation of people who do not know right from wrong, they do not know what to believe any longer!

The Roman Catholic Church blends Scripture with Tradition. In fact, in the Catechism of the Catholic Church they acknowledge that the Roman Catholic Church “does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence.” (CCC 82) Now that is interesting because God never said that tradition is inspired, but He did say that His Word is!

Also they tell us, “The Protestant teaching that the Bible is the sole spiritual authority – sola Scriptura – is nowhere to be found in the Bible. St. Paul wrote to Timothy that Scripture is “useful” (which is an understatement), but neither he nor anyone else in the early Church taught sola Scriptura. And, in fact, nobody believed it until the Reformation.” (From an article by George Sim Johnston posted on the Catholic Information Network).

And we can go on, but I think you can see that the Catholic Church, as well as what we are seeing in many Protestant churches today, don't believe that the Word of God is truly the Word of God. Some place tradition above the Word of God, others put feelings above what God's Word has to say, and others say that these are just stories for us to learn from, to help us be better people, but don't take them to the wrong conclusion regarding sin and judgment! You can't move away from God's Word and not have it affect your life!

Harold Lindsell warns us, “I shall argue that once infallibility is abandoned, however good the intentions of those who do it and however good they feel their reasons for doing so, it always and ever opens the door to further departures from the faith. Once errancy enters an institution, it does not simply become one of several options. It quickly becomes the regnant [reigning] view and infallibility loses its foothold and at last is silenced effectively. When one surveys the current scene in places where errancy has gotten a grip, it soon becomes obvious that there are few champions of inerrancy ready or willing to challenge the new reality.” (Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Truth*, p. 25). Please keep in mind that this book by Harold Lindsell was written in 1976 and we have traveled even farther down that path away from God’s Word today!

Let me share this point with you from Harold Lindsell and I think you will see why I believe this departure from the faith, this moving away from the Bible is dangerous, it is deadly. Harold tells us,

I will contend that embracing a doctrine of an errant Scripture will lead to disaster down the road. . . . it will lull congregations to sleep and undermine their belief in the full-orbed truth of the Bible, it will produce spiritual sloth and decay; and it will finally lead to apostasy. No one should forget that the clearest example of this is the Unitarian Universalist denomination . . . In turning away from Trinitarianism, this group of people turned away from the clear teaching of the Bible.

Underlying their departure from orthodoxy was their disbelief in the infallibility of Scripture. In the early nineteenth century the difference between the Unitarians and the orthodox did not seem so great. But today the chasm is vast. Many Unitarians are atheists; many are humanists. In both the first and the second Humanist Manifestos the names of Unitarian clergymen are prominent. Among Unitarian Universalists the doctrine of sin has disappeared. The gospel is not preached. No missionaries go to the ends of the earth with the good news of Christ's salvation. Nor is the Bible preached in their churches. This group is utterly and completely apostate. No other conclusion is possible.

- Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Truth*, p. 25-26

I hope you are seeing why I believe this is so important for us to understand. This, in a sense, is a theological watershed you might say. It is a dividing line and depending on what side you are on will determine where you will go. Think of it like this. You have all heard of the Continental Divide and so, as water flows on one side of the Continental Divide it flows into the Atlantic Ocean. And, water that flows on the other side of the Continental Divide flows into the Pacific Ocean. And here's the thing. Once the water starts flowing down one side or the other, there is no turning back, its outcome you might say is determined, it will reach the destination from which it is flowing from. And the same is true with errancy and inerrancy. Depending on what you believe regarding the Word of God truly determines where you will end up!

Francis Schaeffer told his listeners at a conference he was speaking at, “the generation of those who first give up biblical inerrancy may have a warm evangelical background and real personal relationships with Jesus Christ so that they can ‘live theologically’ on the basis of their limited-inerrancy viewpoint. But what happens when the next generation tries to build on that foundation?”

How long will it take for a church, for a denomination to go apostate? I don’t know and I think it does vary, but let me also say this. We are into the second, third, fourth generations of people that have departed from the inerrancy of the Scriptures and as you listen and see what the church is teaching, what they are doing, you can see how far they have come.

I want to take some time here this morning and talk about some of these words regarding the Bible and what they mean. I think it is important that we understand what is being said when we speak of revelation, inspiration, inerrancy and-so-on. And then, after we look at these, I will give you the conclusion of all this and I think you will see, if you have not already, how important this subject is for us to understand and apply to our lives, that we can trust God’s Word from Genesis through Revelation or we can’t trust it at all. Either God is truthful in what He says from Genesis through Revelation or He is a liar and we can’t trust Him at all! You see, it all boils down to that and what you believe regarding the Bible speaks volumes of what you believe about God!

BIBLIOLOGY: THE BIBLE

When we speak of Bibliology it is referring to the study of the nature of the Bible and it includes such topics as Revelation, Inspiration, Inerrancy, Illumination and Interpretation. We are going to look at these topics so we can understand what they mean.

1. REVELATION

The word “revelation” comes from the Greek word, APOKALUPSIS, (ap-ok-al'-opp-sis) and it speaks of unveiling or uncovering something. Biblically speaking it is the act and process whereby God makes Himself known to us. There is general revelation where we can see God through nature, we can see His handiwork, that there is a Creator, there is a Designer, there is a God. But natural revelation is limited because it can't tell us who God is and what He desires of us.

We see general revelation spoken of in Psalm 19:1-6, where David tells us, **“The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language Where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, And rejoices like a strong man to run its race. Its rising is from one end of heaven, And its circuit to the other end; And there is nothing hidden from its heat.”**

Then there is special revelation where God speaks to us through His Word. He tells us who He is and He tells us where we stand and what we need to do. It gives to us everything to live lives that are pleasing to Him and to have fellowship with Him through His Son Jesus Christ!

Once again, in Psalm 19:7-14 we see David now speak of special revelation and how it converts the soul, makes us wise and-so-on. David is speaking of the Word of God revealing God to us. He tells us, **“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. More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.”**

So we have general revelation as we look out into this world and we see the handiwork of God, tainted by sin yes, but we still see God’s hand upon this world. Then there is special revelation where God reveals himself to us through His Word, the Bible! That is what revelation is all about.

2. INSPIRATION

When we speak of inspiration of the Scriptures there may be many different ideas of what this means, but what is the Biblical definition? I think Dr. Norman Geisler gives us a very good definition of what inspiration is all about. He wrote,

Inspiration is the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit, who through the different personalities and literary styles of the chosen human authors invested the very words of the original books of the Holy Scripture, alone and in their entirety, as the very Word of God without error in all that they teach or imply (including history and science), and the Bible is thereby the infallible rule and final authority for faith and practice of all believers.

- Dr. Norman Geisler, Systematic Theology
Volume One, Introduction/Bible, p. 241

You may have heard the Scriptures referred to as being verbal and plenary in regards to inspiration. And what that means is this. When it speaks of verbal it is speaking that the words themselves are inspired by God and plenary takes it even farther and speaks of every part of the words and all they teach or imply are inspired by God! Do the Scriptures support this idea of the Bible being inspired by God? We have already heard some people that deny this, so let's see what the Scriptures have to say.

First let's look at II Timothy 3:16 which tell us, "**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.**" I think The New International Version of the Bible makes this verse even clearer for us. It reads, "**All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.**"

The Greek word for, “**given by inspiration of God**” or “**God-breathed**” is THEOPNEUSTOS and it is a combination of two Greek words. The first is THEOS which is God and PNUE which is breath. And thus, like The New International Version tells us, it means “**God-breathed.**”

Now, let’s take what is spoken here and compare it with what we are told in Psalm 33:6, which reads, “**By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.**” I want you to listen carefully to this, it is important. Just as God spoken the universe into existence, He breathed it into existence you might say, God also breathed into existence His Word, the Bible!

Now some may argue that yes, they believe some parts of the Scriptures are inspired by God, but not all of them. Again, to believe that you have to go against what the Scriptures are teaching us. What did we just read in II Timothy 3:16, **All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.**” Paul uses the Greek word PASA for “**All**” and his point is very simple; you don’t even have to know Greek to understand it. He is saying that every single part of the Bible, what we have before us is inspired by God, every bit of it! Then why do people deny it? Because they don’t want to believe what God’s Word has to say!

And so, inspiration does not mean that the writers were smart. Also, it does not mean that God gave to them the general idea and they just filled in the details. There was no mechanical dictation involved. God did not force them to write these words down. It is as Peter tells us in II Peter 1:20-21, **“knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”** The Amplified Bible puts these verses like this, **“[Yet] first [you must] understand this, that no prophecy of Scripture is [a matter] of any personal or private or special interpretation (loosening, solving). For no prophecy ever originated because some man willed it [to do so — it never came by human impulse], but men spoke from God who were borne along (moved and impelled) by the Holy Spirit.”**

Again, this is important for us to understand. Peter is telling us that *NO* Scripture came about by private origin. It did not come from the mind of man. And the way this is written in the Greek, the way it is structured, Peter is speaking of the Word of God, of prophecy, that it is not from man’s doing but God speaking through man. In fact, if verse 20 is confusing, verse 21 I believe clears things up for us. That phrase, **“as they were moved”** in the Greek speaks of being “continually carried” and Luke uses this word in Acts 27 to describe how the wind blows a sailing ship across the waters, (Acts 27:15, 17).

Thus, as these men of God raised their sails you might say, as they submitted their lives to God, the Holy Spirit carried them along in the direction He wanted. God was the writer and man was the instrument He wrote with. He didn’t change the character or styles of the individuals but just spoke through them.

And so this word, “inspiration” speaks of the Bible being breathed out of God to man. Another definition of this word is as follows, “Inspiration is God’s revelation communicated to us through writers who use their own minds, their own words, and yet God had so arranged their lives and their thoughts and their vocabularies, that the words they chose out of their own minds were the very words that God determined from eternity past that they would use to write His truths.”

Let me show you how detailed God is with His Word. In Matthew 22:29-32 we are told, **“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.’”**

What I want you to notice is that even the tenses of verbs are stressed by God! Notice that Jesus said, **“I am the God of . . .”** and not **“I was the God of . . .”** You see, He is speaking of resurrection life! He is the God of the living, not the God of the dead. And even though the bodies of these men have gone back to the dust of the earth, they live on! I think it is interesting that Jesus went to the books of Moses to make His point, to prove there is a resurrection, because the Sadducees, the group He was speaking to, believed in the authority of Moses. It is as Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:8, **“We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”** Our God is that detailed as He gave to us His Word!

Let me give you another one to show you how exact God is when He spoke forth His Word. In Galatians 3:16 Paul tells us, **“Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ.”**

Notice that Paul makes this powerful point and it is all based upon a singular noun versus a plural or **“seed”** instead of **“seeds.”** And if you still don’t get it, Paul tells us that the Seed he is speaking of, the Seed that was spoken of to Abraham, was Christ and it would be through Jesus that the nations of the world would be blessed!

And Paul is speaking of what was said in Genesis 22:18, **“In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”** Once again we see that **“seed”** is singular and not plural and that is what Paul is picking up on here in Galatians 3:16! Our God is very exact in what He says; He is not ambiguous or unclear in what He is saying to us in His Word! Even one letter, like the letter “s” can make a big difference!

And lastly, Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:18, **“For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”** Jesus is declaring to us that even the smallest parts of letters are inspired. We need to understand that Jesus is speaking here to a Jewish audience and the **“jot”** was the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It would be something like an apostrophe to us. A **“tittle”** literally means “little horn” and it speaks of a mark that helps to distinguish one Hebrew letter from another. In other words, not only will the smallest letter not be erased, but even the smallest part of a letter will not be erased from the Law. Not even the tiniest, seemingly most insignificant, part of God’s Word will be removed or modified until all is accomplished.

We will continue next time looking at this subject of “Does It Really Matter?” and continue looking at these words that are thrown out there regarding the Bible and yet, many times we don’t know what they mean, biblically speaking. What I want to finish up speaking about this morning is really what we began with, because it truly does matter what we believe about the Bible!

You see, the Bible clearly shows us that it is to have complete authority over every part of our lives, not just the ones we want! The problem today is that many refuse to accept that authority. We hear things like, “All truth is relative” and what they are saying is that you can’t really believe anything, it is just what you want to believe, there are no absolutes! And when you come to that conclusion, then the Bible becomes just another book and not the inspired Word of God in which God reveals Himself to us through it! Let me share with you these words from John MacArthur. He wrote,

In an article written for *Eternity* magazine many years ago, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote words for the church of the '50's that are even more true for the church of today. Lloyd-Jones points out that the attack on Scriptures authority began in the middle of the eighteenth century with the beginning of what came to be known as the "higher critical" view of Scripture. Naturalistic presuppositions, along with man's knowledge, new discoveries in science, and human reasoning and understanding, were all brought to bear in an attempt to analyze the Bible and "get at its real truth." All of this developed into the movement we know as liberalism, which held sway throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Liberalism saw the Bible as full of errors, the work of men, and something to be accepted as having no more authority than the works of Shakespeare or Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

With the dawn of the twentieth century, a new movement began. Neo-orthodox thinkers tried to restore some of the bible's authority by reaffirming the sinfulness of man and claiming that while the Bible is not the Word of God, it "contains the Word of God." As Lloyd-Jones describes it, "The Bible, we are told, is partly the Word of God and partly the word of man. In part it has great authority and in part is has not."

Lloyd-Jones goes on to point out that this “partly God’s Word, partly man’s word” position leads to a view of the Bible that says that part of it is of great value but there are also other parts that are full of errors and that are “utterly useless and valueless.” But, observes Lloyd-Jones, we are then faced with a very basic question: “Who decides what is true? Who decides what is of value? How can you discriminate and differentiate between the great facts that are true and those that are false? How can you differentiate between and separate facts from teaching? How can you separate this essential message of the Bible from the background in which it is presented? . . . The whole Bible comes to us and offers itself to us in exactly the same way. There is no hint, no suspicion of a suggestion that parts of it are important and parts are not. They all come to us in the same form.”

Liberalism and neo-orthodoxy are still with us in every conceivable shape and form. As Lloyd-Jones wrote in 1957, “The modern position amounts to this that it is really man’s reasons that decide. You and I come to the Bible and we have to make our decision on the basis of certain standards, which are obviously in our minds. We decide that one portion conforms to the message, which we believe, and that another does not. We are left still with the position, in spite of all the talk about a new situation today, that man’s knowledge and man’s understanding are the final arbiter and the final court of appeal.”

- John MacArthur, *Why Believe the Bible?*, pp. 17-18

You see, the bottom line is this. You can't pick and choose what you want from the Bible because you are not God and you did not put forth these words that are here in the Scripture. Those are two important points which eliminate us from going against what God has said in His Word, denying it is from Him or that only parts of the Bible are from God and other parts are not. You see, you then have to decide which ones are of God and which ones are not of God and I will tell you this, you will pick the ones that deal with love, forgiveness and you will reject the ones that deal with judgment and Hell and that is exactly what we are seeing in the churches today!

Remember what Paul said in II Timothy 3:16-17, **“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.”** Notice that it is **“All Scripture”** is breathed from God and given to us to help us be complete in this life. Thus, why do we see all the evil, all the immorality, all the wickedness in this world? Because man refuses to surrender his life to God and obey His Word and thus, what we have sown we are now reaping!

So we have seen this morning that God has revealed Himself to us through His Word, the Bible. We see it in general revelation or in nature that there is a God, we just can't know Him personally through general revelation. It is through special revelation, through the Word of God that we can know God; we can have a relationship with Him as we come to Jesus and ask Him to be Lord and Savior of our lives, to forgive us of our sins!

And we looked at inspiration and we saw that this extends to every part of the Scriptures, from Genesis through Revelation. You see, the omniscient God cannot be wrong about anything He teaches and thus, we can trust in what He tells us in His Word! As I close this morning, let me leave you with this to think about.

As people move away from God's Word, it may be slow and gradual. It may be almost invisible to see with the naked eye. And tragically, when they awake to what has happened, many times it is too late. Think about this for a minute. Millions of people die unnecessarily because the cancer that killed them was diagnosed too late!

You see, that cancer existed long before the diagnosis was made and that cancer grew and spread until it infected the entire body and thus, when it was diagnosed, the situation was hopeless.

As churches, as denominations, as people move away from the Word of God it is like a cancer that is growing inside them and unchecked. And that will spread until there is death to that church, that denomination, that person because they have moved so far away from God's Word there is no life in them anymore!

Look at the churches and denominations that have moved away from God's Word and see where they are at today! It is not good. You see, we need to learn from history for if we don't we are bound to repeat its deadly mistakes.

May you leave here today with a greater love for God's Word and for God as He reveals Himself to us through His Word, which has been breathed from His mouth to us! How God loves us and if you doubt that, read His Word and let it sink deep down into your heart. Believe what God has said, don't doubt it, but treasure it and live by it! Does it really matter? You bet it does!