

Can the Bible be trusted?

Introduction

*You alone can lead men, by the proclamation of God's word, out of the crash and jazz and noise and rattle and smoke of this weary age into green pastures and beside the still waters; you alone, as ministers of reconciliation, can give what the world with all its boasting and pride can never give—the infinite sweetness of the communion of the redeemed soul with the living God.*³⁶

1) Can the Bible be trusted?

a) The short answer is yes

i) We all trust in something. Even the most skeptical among us exercises complete trust in many things. When we stand up, we trust that our legs will hold us. When we sit down, we trust the chair. We trust that, when we inhale, the right amount of oxygen will be present to sustain us. When we go to bed, we trust that the earth will continue its rotation so that morning will come. We have chosen to place trust in these things because of their past reliability. We choose to trust; otherwise, we would live in a constant state of fear and uncertainty.

ii) When it comes to God and the Bible we face the same question and our answers may come from the same place. But is it reasonable to trust what the Bible teaches?

iii) To choose against faith in God also requires trust. We must trust that God does *not* exist, that He cannot be known by us, and that this choice has no impact on our lives and eternity. Denying God's existence takes a leap of faith because the questions raised in the Bible still demand to be answered. Those who discount the Bible must supply answers themselves to countless questions with no ready answers, such as those dealing with the meaning of life (being has its ground in God) and the complexity of design seen in the universe.

(1) Many who choose to trust something other than the Bible must finally agree with atheist Bertrand Russell, who concluded that, if life beyond the grave is a myth, then life before the grave has no meaning.

b) What is your ultimate authority?

i) This answers the question: How do you know? – knowledge has its ground in what God has said

(1) My essential foundation and absolute authority = God

(a) How can I know God? – He must want to know me – I can only know God if He chooses to reveal Himself to me

(i) **1 Corinthians 2:9–10 (ESV)** ⁹ But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”— ¹⁰ these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches, everything, even the depths of God.

1. All our knowledge of God originates in Him

a. God's knowledge is infinite

b. Our knowledge is finite

(b) How can I know anything?

(i) Rationalism

1. The rationalists believed that reality has an intrinsically logical structure. Because of this, the rationalists argued that certain truths exist and that the intellect can directly grasp these truths. Rationalists asserted that certain rational principles exist in logic, mathematics, ethics, and metaphysics that are so fundamentally true that denying them causes one to fall into contradiction. The rationalists had such a high confidence in

³⁶ Machen, 'Consolations in the Midst of Battle', in *What is Christianity?*, 238.

reason that empirical proof and physical evidence were regarded as unnecessary to ascertain certain truths – in other words, "there are significant ways in which our concepts and knowledge are gained independently of sense experience".¹

(ii) Empiricism

1. Empiricism in the philosophy of science emphasizes evidence, especially as discovered in experiments. It is a fundamental part of the scientific method that all hypotheses and theories must be tested against observations of the natural world rather than resting solely on a priori (that which comes before²) reasoning, intuition, or revelation.

(iii) Revelation

1. We received what we know about God because God told us

(c) Source of Knowledge

(i) The self-revelation or self-communication of God to his creatures

1. God's Revelation

- a. General – creation – all the trees of the garden are good to eat
- b. Special – Scriptures- not that one

(ii) Thus, when we open our Bibles to learn about God, we are not approaching an ancient text that we can, in some lordly way, stand over and judge. Rather, we are encountering the "living and active" word of God that has the power to kill and make alive. Even when we come to Scripture seeking to know God, we come as mere servants saying, "Speak Lord, for your servant hears."

(iii) Unlike our own thoughts, opinions, and words about God that are mixtures of truth and error or are even blasphemous, God through the means of Holy Scripture gives us reliable, true knowledge of himself and in a form (a book) that is palatable to us and our creaturely intellects.

c) Why does it matter?

i) What is the final arbiter of truth?

- (1) Roman Catholic – The Church
- (2) Protestant – Sola Scriptura
- (3) Mormon – Joseph Smith/Living Prophet
- (4) Jehovah Witness – Watchtower Society
- (5) Athiest – Himself/reason
- (6) Agnostic – Unknown
- (7) You -???

(8) Me - The external knowledge of Scripture is united with the internal knowledge given by the Holy Spirit. When God pierces us with the arrows of his love, we carry his words thrust deep into our inner being.¹⁶ Revelation occurs when the same Spirit who spoke by the mouth of the prophets and apostles finds entry into our hearts, convincing us that "they rendered faithfully what they had been told to say by God."¹⁷ Revelation happened in a final and definitive form in the apostolic encounter with Jesus Christ. But revelation happens again and again in the experience of the Spirit

¹ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Rationalism vs. Empiricism First published August 19, 2004; substantive revision March 31, 2013 cited on May 20, 2013.

² Consider the proposition, "If George V reigned at least four days, then he reigned more than three days." This is something that one knows *a priori*, because it expresses a statement that one *can* derive by reason alone.

¹⁶ *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, trans. and ed. E. M. Blaiklock (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 9.2, p. 213. Calvin also stressed that the knowledge of God must take root within us: "It is not enough to know Christ as crucified and raised up from the dead, unless you experience, also, the fruit of this... Christ therefore is rightly known, when we feel how powerful his death and resurrection are, and how efficacious they are in us." John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, trans. John Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1851), p. 98.

¹⁷ See Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 1:225. Barth is here aligning himself with Calvin's position.

of Christ. We might say that “God’s self–revelation is completed *in* the knowledge that we have of Him.”¹⁸³

(a) The Word working through the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer

2) What truth claims does the Bible make

a) It is inspired

i) **2 Timothy 3:16** (ESV) ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

ii) **2 Peter 1:20–21** (ESV) ²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

(1) Descriptions of inspiration in the OT

(a) **Deuteronomy 18:18** (ESV) ¹⁸ I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

(b) **2 Samuel 23:2** (ESV) ² “The Spirit of the Lord speaks by me; his word is on my tongue.

(c) **Isaiah 59:21** (ESV) ²¹ “And as for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the Lord: “My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children’s offspring,” says the Lord, “from this time forth and forevermore.”

(d) **Zechariah 7:12** (ESV) ¹² They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the Lord of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore, great anger came from the Lord of hosts.

(e) **Matthew 22:43** (ESV) ⁴³ He said to them, “How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying,

(f) **Acts 4:24–25** (ESV) ²⁴ And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, ²⁵ who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, “ ‘Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain?

(g) **Hebrews 4:7** (ESV) ⁷ again he appoints a certain day, “Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.”

(h) **Jeremiah 1:7** (ESV) ⁷ But the Lord said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak.

(i) **Jeremiah 1:9** (ESV) ⁹ Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said to me, “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.

(j) **Exodus 4:12** (ESV) ¹² Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.”

(k) **Numbers 22:38** (ESV) ³⁸ Balaam said to Balak, “Behold, I have come to you! Have I now any power of my own to speak anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that must I speak.”

(l) **1 Samuel 15:3** (ESV) ³ Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.””

¹⁸ H. M. Kuitert, *Do You Understand What You Read?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1970), p. 29.

³ Bloesch, Donald G. *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration & Interpretation*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994. Print.

- (m) **1 Samuel 15:18** (ESV) ¹⁸ And the Lord sent you on a mission and said, ‘Go, devote to destruction the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.’
- (n) **1 Samuel 15:23** (ESV) ²³ For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king.”
- (o) **1 Kings 20:36** (ESV) ³⁶ Then he said to him, “Because you have not obeyed the voice of the Lord, behold, as soon as you have gone from me, a lion shall strike you down.” And as soon as he had departed from him, a lion met him and struck him down.
- (p) **2 Chronicles 20:20** (ESV) ²⁰ And they rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. And when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Hear me, Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the Lord your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed.”
- (q) **2 Chronicles 25:15–16** (ESV) ¹⁵ Therefore the Lord was angry with Amaziah and sent to him a prophet, who said to him, “Why have you sought the gods of a people who did not deliver their own people from your hand?” ¹⁶ But as he was speaking, the king said to him, “Have we made you a royal counselor? Stop! Why should you be struck down?” So the prophet stopped, but said, “I know that God has determined to destroy you, because you have done this and have not listened to my counsel.”
- (r) **Isaiah 30:12–14** (ESV) ¹² Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel, “Because you despise this word and trust in oppression and perverseness and rely on them, ¹³ therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach in a high wall, bulging out and about to collapse, whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant; ¹⁴ and its breaking is like that of a potter’s vessel that is smashed so ruthlessly that among its fragments not a shard is found with which to take fire from the hearth, or to dip up water out of the cistern.”
- (s) **Jeremiah 6:10–12** (ESV) ¹⁰ To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ears are uncircumcised, they cannot listen; behold, the word of the Lord is to them an object of scorn; they take no pleasure in it. ¹¹ Therefore I am full of the wrath of the Lord; I am weary of holding it in. “Pour it out upon the children in the street, and upon the gatherings of young men, also; both husband and wife shall be taken, the elderly and the very aged. ¹² Their houses shall be turned over to others, their fields and wives together, for I will stretch out my hand against the inhabitants of the land,” declares the Lord.
- (t) **Jeremiah 36:29–31** (ESV) ²⁹ And concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah you shall say, ‘Thus says the Lord, You have burned this scroll, saying, “Why have you written in it that the king of Babylon will certainly come and destroy this land, and will cut off from it man and beast?”’ ³⁰ Therefore thus says the Lord concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah: He shall have none to sit on the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out to the heat by day and the frost by night. ³¹ And I will punish him and his offspring and his servants for their iniquity. I will bring upon them and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem and upon the people of Judah all the disaster that I have pronounced against them, but they would not hear.’”

(2) Descriptions of inspiration of the NT

- (a) The New Testament writers considered their writings to be inspired Scripture. Peter, speaking of Paul’s epistles, said they too were “Scripture” (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16) just as the Old Testament was.⁴

⁴ Geisler, Norman L. *Systematic Theology, Volume One: Introduction, Bible*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2002. Print.

- (i) **2 Peter 3:15–16** (ESV) ¹⁵ And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶ as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.
 - (ii) **1 Timothy 5:18** (ESV) ¹⁸ For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.”
 - 1. Det 25:4 and Matt 10:10, Luke 10:7 – called scripture
 - (iii) **1 Corinthians 2:13** (ESV) ¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.
 - (iv) **1 Corinthians 14:37** (ESV) ³⁷ If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord.
- b) Biblical writers claim “Thus says the Lord”
- i) Phrases such as “thus says the Lord” (Isa. 1:11, 18; Jer. 2:3, 5, etc.),
 - ii) “God said” (Gen. 1:3, 6, etc.),
 - iii) “the Word of the LORD came to me” (Jer. 34:1; Eze. 30:1, etc.) or the like are found hundreds of times in Scripture.
 - (1) These reveal beyond question that the writer is claiming to give the very Word of God. In the book of Leviticus alone there are some sixty-six occurrences of phrases like “the LORD spoke unto Moses” (cf. 1:1; 4:1; 5:14; 6:1, 8, 19; 7:22).
 - iv) Countless times Ezekiel records phrases such as “I saw visions” or “the word of the LORD came to me.”
 - v) In one short section (chapter 12) there are eleven such examples (vv. 8, 10, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25–26, 28 twice), and sometimes there are two in the same verse (Ezek 20:3).
 - vi) The same is true of Jeremiah (cf. 1:2, 4, 11, 13; 2:1, 3, 5, etc.),
 - vii) Isaiah (cf. 1:1, 11, 18, 24; 2:1, etc.), and other prophets.
 - viii) The overall impression leaves no doubt as to the confessed source of their messages.⁵
- c) The Word of God
- i) **Matthew 15:6** (ESV) ⁶ he need not honor his father.’ So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God.
 - ii) **Romans 3:2** (ESV) ² Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.
 - iii) **1 Peter 1:23** (ESV) ²³ since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;
 - iv) **Hebrews 4:12** (ESV) ¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
- d) It is truth
- i) **Psalms 119:160** (ESV) ¹⁶⁰ The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.
 - ii) **John 17:17** (ESV) ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.
- e) It is our guide
- i) **Psalms 119:105** (ESV) ¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

⁵ Geisler, Norman L. Systematic Theology, Volume One: Introduction, Bible. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2002. Print.

- ii) **Matthew 4:4** (ESV) ⁴ But he answered, “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ”
 - f) It is indestructible
 - i) **Matthew 5:17–18** (ESV) ¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.
 - g) Infallible
 - i) **John 10:35–36** (ESV) ³⁵ If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken— ³⁶ do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?
 - h) Final arbiter
 - i) **Matthew 4:4** (ESV) ⁴ But he answered, “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.””
 - ii) **Matthew 4:7** (ESV) ⁷ Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”
 - iii) **Matthew 4:10** (ESV) ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.””
 - i) Sufficient for faith
 - i) **Luke 16:31** (ESV) ³¹ He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”
 - ii) **2 Timothy 3:14–17** (ESV) ¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.
- 3) Passages to Master
- a) **Psalm 19:1-6 – God speaks through creation – General Revelation is as clear as if God used words**
 - i) **Psalm 19:1–6** (ESV) ¹ The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. ² Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. ³ There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. ⁴ Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun, ⁵ which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy. ⁶ Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat.
- (1) We’ve all had the experience of hearing a song or seeing a piece of art and, though we hadn’t heard or seen it before that moment, we instantly recognize the source. Whether it’s the distinctive voice of Bob Dylan, the harmony of the Eagles, the rhythm of Fats Domino, the bold colors of Vincent van Gogh, or the landscapes of Michael Atkinson, the distinctive details and patterns of the artistic creation point toward or even reveal the identity of its creator.⁶
- (2) Similarly, creation points us to the One who created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1): “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork” (Ps. 19:1). “Heavens” and “sky” likely function as a figure of speech called synecdoche (using a part to refer to the whole): the heavens *and all that is in them* reveal God. In the same way, the earth and the rest of creation reveal the Creator’s glory. David uses personification, another figure of speech, to

⁶ Blount, Douglas K. et al. “How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth.” *Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. Ed. Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Svelgel. I. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. 32. Print.

describe this form of revelation: “Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.... Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world” (vv. 2, 4).

(a) Whether day or night, *God is revealed*.

(b) Whether there are observers, *God is revealed*.

(c) Whether there is human response, *God is revealed*.⁷

b) Romans 1-3 – Humans rebel against God’s Revelation

- i) Romans 1–3 (ESV) ¹ Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, ⁷ To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. ⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you ¹⁰ always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God’s will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. ¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— ¹² that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine. ¹³ I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. ¹⁴ I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. ¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.” ¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. ²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. ²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent,

⁷ Blount, Douglas K. et al. “How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth.” *Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. Ed. Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Svigel. I. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. 32. Print.

haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.³² Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.¹ Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.² We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things.³ Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God?⁴ Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?⁵ But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.⁶ He will render to each one according to his works:⁷ to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life;⁸ but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.⁹ There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek,¹⁰ but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.¹¹ For God shows no partiality.¹² For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.¹³ For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.¹⁴ For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them¹⁶ on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.¹⁷ But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God¹⁸ and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law;¹⁹ and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,²⁰ an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—²¹ you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal?²² You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?²³ You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law.²⁴ For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."²⁵ For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision.²⁶ So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?²⁷ Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law.²⁸ For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical.²⁹ But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.¹ Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?² Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.³ What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?⁴ By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged."⁵ But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.)⁶ By no means! For then how could God judge the world?⁷ But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner?⁸ And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.⁹ What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all,

both Jews and Greeks, are under sin,¹⁰ as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one;¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God.¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”¹³ “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.”¹⁴ “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.”¹⁵ “Their feet are swift to shed blood;¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery,¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known.”¹⁸ “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.²⁷ Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith.²⁸ For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.²⁹ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,³⁰ since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.³¹ Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

- (1) In Romans 1, in what may be (at least in part) an exposition of Psalm 19, the apostle Paul addresses the question of salvation as it relates to God’s general revelation through creation. But he first declares his confidence in the gospel, “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). In short, the gospel alone—that is, God revealed through special revelation—is the means of salvation. There’s no other way for anyone to be saved, for in the gospel “the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith” (v. 17). Salvation is by grace alone through faith in Christ alone (Eph. 2:8–9).
- (2) Paul then follows with an extended demonstration of human sinfulness—the reason for our need of *and* his great confidence in the good news of Jesus Christ. Every human being needs salvation, for “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Because of sin, “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (1:18).
- (3) God is righteous. His wrath, the right and just response to sin, is not against human ignorance but human rebellion. His glory is revealed in the very heavens, all around us; we are responsible for what we do with His revelation. The everlasting divine Creator is revealed in what He has done:
 - (a) What can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. (Rom. 1:19–20)
 - (b) God’s “invisible attributes” have been made visible; His “eternal power and divine nature” are revealed in what He has made “ever since the creation of the world” down to the present day. Creation and providence reveal God (cf. John 1; Col. 1)—the problem isn’t insufficient divine revelation.
 - (c) Listen to Paul’s language in describing how humans have treated the knowledge of God from creation:
 - (i) people “suppress the truth” (Rom. 1:18);

- (ii) “although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him” (v. 21);
- (iii) “exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things” (v. 23);
- (iv) “exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (v. 25).

1. People have chosen idolatry—serving created beings and created things (Ex. 32:1–8; cf. Isa. 44:9–20; Jer. 10:1–10).

(d) For this willfully ignoring and rebelling against divine revelation, God “gave them up” (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28), allowing them to go their own way and to experience the consequences.

(i) The manifestations of this defiance?

1. [People who are] filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice ... envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness ... [people who’ve become] gossips, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. (vv. 29–31)

(4) We are guilty before a just God

(a) Therefore, you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. (Rom. 2:1–2)

(b) To the person—*anyone*—who presumes to be innocent, to fall outside the indictment of Romans 3:23, Paul issues this correction: *We’re all guilty*. Each of us should see ourselves in this list of human rebellion.

(5) General revelation, then, is clear, plain, and bright. God reveals himself, “his eternal power and divine nature” (Rom. 1:20) in what He has made. But on our own, none of us recognizes Him, responds in worship, or submits to Him. We are all rebels, we have all gone our own way, and we are all in need of salvation.

(6) when perceived and interpreted in light of special revelation, general revelation supplements a fuller knowledge of God and His creation. Perceived with eyes wide open, illumined by the Holy Spirit, and interpreted by faith, general revelation helps us better understand God, His creation, and His plan of redemption. In a balanced Christian method of doing theology, general and special revelation complement each other.⁸

c) Hebrews 1:1-2 – God has spoken in various ways but now through His Son. Revelation is the process by which God communicates to human beings a knowledge of himself.⁹

i) Hebrews 1:1–2 (ESV) ¹ Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

(1) The writer of the letter to the Hebrews expressed it this way: “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets” (1:1). Over a long period of time, from Moses to Malachi, God has spoken through human beings, some of whom wrote books that are part of the canon (e.g., Samuel, Isaiah, and Jeremiah) while others spoke but did not leave a written record of God’s words (e.g., Elijah and Elisha). Either way, God communicated His will to people through the prophets He appointed.¹⁰

⁸ Blount, Douglas K. et al. “How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth.” *Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. Ed. Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Svelig. I. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. 35. Print.

⁹ Lea, Thomas D., and Hayne P. Griffin. *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*. Vol. 34. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992. Print. The New American Commentary.

¹⁰ Blount, Douglas K. et al. “How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth.” *Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. Ed. Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Svelig. I. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. 37. Print.

- (2) Sometimes God spoke through visions and dreams, sometimes with powerful and spectacular signs, other times in a quiet voice, once even through a donkey! (Num. 22:21–39). God’s prophets pointed forward in anticipation of the greatest Prophet
- (a) **Deuteronomy 18:15–19** (ESV) ¹⁵ “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen— ¹⁶ just as you desired of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’ ¹⁷ And the Lord said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. ¹⁸ I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. ¹⁹ And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.
- (i) God’s own Son, Jesus Christ.
- (3) Jesus, the Word,⁵ is the last and final Word of God
- (a) **John 1:1** (ESV) ¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- (b) **Hebrews 1:2** (ESV) ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.
- (4) He’s the Creator of the world
- (a) **Hebrews 1:2** (ESV) ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.
- (b) **Genesis 1:1** (ESV) ¹ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.
- (5) the “radiance of the glory of God,” “the exact imprint of his nature” who “upholds the universe by the word of his power”
- (a) **Hebrews 1:3** (ESV) ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
- (6) He isn’t a creature or inferior to God; He *is* God
- (a) **John 1:1–2** (ESV) ¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God.
- (7) He’s the ultimate mediator between God and humanity
- (a) **1 Timothy 2:5** (ESV) ⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,
- (8) He finished His work on the cross, in anticipation of His return to the earth to re-create it anew
- (a) **Revelation 21:1–8** (ESV) ¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” ⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” ⁶ And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. ⁷ The one who conquers will have this

⁵ See Part Two, Passages to Master, Passage 10, “John 1:1–18: God in the Flesh.”

heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.⁸ But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

(9) “he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”

(a) **Hebrews 1:3** (ESV)³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

(10) He was and is and ever will be superior to all.¹¹

(11) Jesus wrote none of the Scriptures, but He is the subject of both the Old (John 5; Luke 24) and New Testaments;

(a) **Revelation 19:10** (ESV)¹⁰ Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

(12) He promised the disciples in the upper room, “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning”

(a) **John 15:26–27** (ESV)²⁶ “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.²⁷ And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

(13) He also guaranteed, “He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you”

(a) **John 14:26** (ESV)²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

ii) **All divine revelation, special and general, is fulfilled and interpreted in and through Jesus Christ.**¹²

d) **2 Tim 3:14-4:4 – All scripture is inspired by God**

i) **2 Timothy 3:14–4:4** (ESV)¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.¹ I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom:² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

(1) In all the New Testament, the word *God-breathed* (often translated “inspired”) appears only here. Yet the concept is found throughout the Scriptures. When prophets spoke for God, their words were from God, by means of God’s Spirit, and this is what *God-breathed* means—carried by the Spirit, the very “breath” of God.¹³

¹¹ Blount, Douglas K. et al. “How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth.” *Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. Ed. Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Svelig. I. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. 37. Print.

¹² Blount, Douglas K. et al. “How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth.” *Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. Ed. Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Svelig. I. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. 37–38. Print.

¹³ Blount, Douglas K. et al. “How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth.” *Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. Ed. Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Svelig. I. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. 38. Print.

(2) “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (3:16). Scripture is God-breathed (Greek *theopneustos*)—it has God as its source, through the work of His Spirit (Greek *pneuma*). This is what constitutes these writings as Holy Scripture. Written by human authors, they are nevertheless God’s words as if carried by the very breath of His mouth.¹⁴

(3) the Scriptures are the result of a process by which God used the human author’s experiences, word choices, and intentions to accomplish His will. Charles Ryrie memorably defines inspiration as “the act by which God superintended the human authors of the Bible so that they composed and recorded without error his message to mankind in the words of their original writings.”⁶¹⁵

(4) Inspiration

(a) 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 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 believers¹⁶

(b) The Bible quotes the serpent, who contradicted God’s words to Adam and Eve when he said, “You will not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). Scripture also quotes the “fool” who denies that God exists (Ps. 14:1; 53:1). The Bible is not verifying these false statements; it is quoting them accurately. This is why we clarify that Scripture is true in all it affirms but doesn’t affirm everything it accurately reports. Even so, God inspired all Scripture, even accurate reports of inaccurate statements.¹⁷

(5) Paul gives two purposes for the scriptures

(a) able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus

(b) that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work

(i) The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.⁷

e) 2 Pet 1:16-21 – Prophets moved by the Spirit

i) **2 Peter 1:16–21 (ESV)** ¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” ¹⁸ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹ And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

¹⁴ Blount, Douglas K. et al. “How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth.” *Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. Ed. Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Sviel. I. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. 40. Print.

⁶ Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 71.

¹⁵ Blount, Douglas K. et al. “How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth.” *Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. Ed. Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Sviel. I. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. 40. Print.

¹⁶ Geisler, Norman L. *Systematic Theology, Volume One: Introduction, Bible*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2002. Print.

¹⁷ Blount, Douglas K. et al. “How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth.” *Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. Ed. Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Sviel. I. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. 40. Print.

⁷ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Bible Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 127.

(1) This passage has repeated markers showing that genuine prophecy is sourced in God, not in people. Peter hammers home this basic message both explicitly and implicitly. One example is how he applies the word *carried* or *borne* to both the voice he heard from heaven on the holy mountain (“we ourselves heard this very voice *borne* from heaven,” v. 18) and the way the Spirit uses prophets to deliver God’s intended message (“men spoke from God as they were carried along [*borne*] by the Holy Spirit,” v. 21). This missive is subtle but powerful: In the same way God’s message to us on the mountain was made clear, carried by a supernatural voice, God’s message to you is made clear, delivered through men who were carried by His Spirit in the process of crafting that prophetic message.¹⁸

(2) Prophecy did not come from human will or impulse but they are sourced in God

f) 1 Cor 2:10-13 – Words taught by the Spirit

i) **1 Corinthians 2:6–16 (ESV)** ⁶ Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. ⁷ But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”— ¹⁰ these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. ¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. ¹⁶ “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

ii) *Where did you get that?*

(1) What a blessing to find a direct answer in the pages of Scripture. The apostle Paul, in his first letter to the church at Corinth, explains in very satisfactory detail the source of the apostolic message.

(2) Paul presents an intriguing defense of his ministry among the Corinthian believers in chapter 2, along with a defense of his authority as an apostle. (He included similar defenses of the latter throughout his messages for them; it seems that some part of this church was vocally challenging his authority and leading other members to be factious or schismatic.) Here, he explains that he did not source the content of his teaching; it all came from God, whose wisdom is revealed in Jesus Christ, “the Lord of glory” (v. 8).¹⁹

(3) Paul said the content of the apostles’ teaching, revealed to them by the Holy Spirit (v. 10), actually *is* the “thoughts of God” (v. 11) and “the depths of God” (v. 10). These can only come from the Spirit of God, for no one else can possibly know His thoughts and His depths.

(4) The apostles have imparted the thoughts of God in “words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit” (v. 13). The very *words* came from God’s Spirit. Note that Paul distinguishes carefully between the thoughts of God, the content of his teaching, and spiritual words the Holy

¹⁸ Blount, Douglas K. et al. “How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth.” *Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. Ed. Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Svelgel. I. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. 43–44. Print.

¹⁹ Blount, Douglas K. et al. “How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth.” *Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. Ed. Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Svelgel. I. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. 44–45. Print.

Spirit taught, the form of his teaching. The apostolic doctrine is God's thoughts ("interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual" [v. 13]) in words taught by God's Spirit.²⁰

- (5) To say it another way, the apostles' teaching is from God through the Spirit's ministry, whose revealing and teaching extend even to the choosing of the words that express God's thoughts. As Carl Henry puts it, "Inspiration is a supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon divinely chosen agents in consequence of which their writings become trustworthy and authoritative."⁹²¹

iii) Inspiration

(1) Orthodoxy

- (a) God is the source
- (b) The Words are the product
- (c) The Holy Spirit is the Agent

g) John 17:17 God's Word is True

i) John 17:17 (ESV) ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

(1) Inerrancy

- (a) Inerrancy is the view that when all the facts become known, they will demonstrate that the Bible in its original autographs and correctly interpreted is entirely true and never false in all it affirms, whether that relates to doctrine or ethics or to the social, physical, or life sciences.¹¹

(b) See Chicago statement of inerrancy attached

- (i) God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.
- (ii) Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms, obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.
- (iii) The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
- (iv) Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
- (v) The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.

(2) Jesus own attitude toward scripture captured in a simple statement. Your word is truth

- (a) It was argued that all the words in the Bible are God's words, and that therefore to disbelieve or disobey any word in Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God. It was argued further that the Bible clearly teaches that God cannot lie or speak falsely (2 Sam. 7:28; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). Therefore, all the words in Scripture are claimed to be completely true and without error in any part (Num. 23:19; Pss. 12:6; 119:89, 96; Prov. 30:5; Matt. 24:35). God's words are, in fact, the ultimate standard of truth (John 17:17).

²⁰ Blount, Douglas K. et al. "How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth." *Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. Ed. Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Svelig. I. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. 45–46. Print.

⁹ Carl F. H. Henry, "Bible, Inspiration of" in Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 160.

²¹ Blount, Douglas K. et al. "How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth." *Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. Ed. Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Svelig. I. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. 46. Print.

¹¹ Paul D. Feinberg, "Bible, Inerrancy and Infallibility of" in Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., 156.

- (b) Though error and at least partial falsehood may characterize the speech of every human being, it is the characteristic of God's speech even when spoken through sinful human beings that it is never false and that it never affirms error: "God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should repent" (Num. 23:19) was spoken by sinful Balaam specifically about the prophetic words that God had spoken through his own lips.²²
- (c) *The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact.*

(i) **The Bible Can Be Inerrant and Still Speak in the Ordinary Language of Everyday Speech**

1. The Bible can speak of the sun rising and the rain falling because from the perspective of the speaker this is exactly what happens.
2. A reporter can say that 8,000 men were killed in a certain battle without thereby implying that he has counted everyone and that there are not 7,999 or 8,001 dead soldiers. If roughly 8,000 died, it would of course be false to say that 16,000 died, but it would not be false in most contexts for a reporter to say that 8,000 men died when in fact 7,823 or 8,242 had died: the limits of truthfulness would depend on the degree of precision implied by the speaker and expected by his original hearers.
3. Measurements also, in order to be true, should conform to the degree of precision implied by the speaker and expected by the hearers in the original context. It should not trouble us, then, to affirm both that the Bible is truthful in everything it says and that it uses ordinary language to describe natural phenomena or to give approximations or round numbers when those are appropriate in the context.²³

(ii) **The Bible Can Be Inerrant and Still Include Loose or Free Quotations**

1. Written Greek at the time of the New Testament had no quotation marks or equivalent kinds of punctuation, and an accurate citation of another person needed to include only a correct representation of the *content* of what the person said (rather like our indirect quotations): it was not expected to cite each word exactly. Thus, inerrancy is consistent with loose or free quotations of the Old Testament or of the words of Jesus, for example, so long as the *content* is not false to what was originally stated. The original writer did not ordinarily imply that he was using the exact words of the speaker and only those, nor did the original hearers expect verbatim quotation in such reporting

(iii) **It Is Consistent with Inerrancy to Have Unusual or Uncommon Grammatical Constructions in the Bible**

1. Some of the language of Scripture is elegant and stylistically excellent. Other scriptural writings contain the rough-hewn language of ordinary people. At times this includes a failure to follow the commonly accepted "rules" of grammatical expression (such as the use of a plural verb where grammatical rules would require a singular verb, or the use of a feminine adjective where a masculine one would be expected, or different spelling for a word than the one commonly used, etc.). These stylistically or grammatically irregular statements (which are especially found in the book of Revelation) should not trouble us, for they do not affect the truthfulness of the

²² Grudem, Wayne A. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004. Print.

²³ Grudem, Wayne A. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004. Print.

statements under consideration: a statement can be ungrammatical but still be entirely true.²⁴

h) Deuteronomy 31:24-26 – The Birth of OT Canon

i) **Deuteronomy 31:24–26 (ESV)**²⁴ When Moses had finished writing the words of this law in a book to the very end,²⁵ Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord,²⁶ “Take this Book of the Law and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against you.

(1) Near the end of Moses’ life, he “finished writing the words of this law in a book to the very end” (Deut. 31:24). That is, he completed the first five books—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. And these would not serve merely as historical records. Explaining why he wrote them and how they were to function, “Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, ‘Take this Book of the Law and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against you’ ” (vv. 25–26).

(2) In other words, immediately after their writing, these books were to start functioning as a canon—the standard against which to measure all beliefs and practices. Significantly, the first biblical canon was placed beside the ark of the covenant, which was a representation of God’s presence among His people. The implication was clear: this text carries His authority. When you read these words, you’re hearing from God himself—it is God’s Word.

(3) The elders of Israel didn’t select the canon. Moses didn’t ask the Levites to vote on canonizing the Bible, and he made no proclamation about the books’ status as Holy Scripture. The people were to treat it as having the same authority as Moses himself—that is, *God’s* authority.

(4) This passage reveals the fundamental reason for a believing community to accept a writing as canonical, that is, authoritative—the prophetic authority of the writer. Since Moses’ authority as God’s prophet was unquestioned, his writings were received as from the mouth of God.²⁵

ii) Joshua’s obedience to the command demonstrates that the people immediately received the five books of Moses as binding canon

(1) **Joshua 1:8 (ESV)**⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

(2) **Joshua 8:30–35 (ESV)**³⁰ At that time Joshua built an altar to the Lord, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal,³¹ just as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded the people of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, “an altar of uncut stones, upon which no man has wielded an iron tool.” And they offered on it burnt offerings to the Lord and sacrificed peace offerings.³² And there, in the presence of the people of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written.³³ And all Israel, sojourner as well as native born, with their elders and officers and their judges, stood on opposite sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, half of them in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded at the first, to bless the people of Israel.³⁴ And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law.³⁵ There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who lived among them.

²⁴ Grudem, Wayne A. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004. Print.

²⁵ Blount, Douglas K. et al. “How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth.” *Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. Ed. Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Svigel. I. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. 50. Print.

iii) Therefore, revelation in the form of canonical writings was tied to the prophetic office or to the special gift of prophesying demonstrated in those like Joshua, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and others among God's holy men. The disappearance of prophets and the closing of that era, then, marked the end of the Old Testament canon. The last canonical writing to appear was from Malachi, in the fifth century BC. Only one prophet, John the Baptist, is known to have followed Malachi, and he contributed no written works to the Old Testament canon.²⁶

i) 2 Pet 3:15-16 – The Rise of the NT Canon

i) **2 Peter 3:15–16 (ESV)** ¹⁵ And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶ as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

(1) Inspired writings were recognized by the original recipients (individuals and churches) as they were written and received

(a) **2 Thessalonians 2:15 (ESV)** ¹⁵ So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.

(2) This was due to the already recognized authority of genuine apostles and prophets, gifted and given by Jesus Christ to the church

(a) **Ephesians 4:11–14 (ESV)** ¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

(3) It was the immovable and infallible doctrinal foundation of these teachings upon which the churches' theology and practice were to be built

(a) **Ephesians 2:20 (ESV)** ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,

(4) Very early in the apostolic period, churches began copying, sharing, collecting, and using the apostles' and prophets' writings as standards alongside the Old Testament Scriptures.²⁷

ii) Four things we learn from this text

(1) First, Peter told the churches to whom he was writing that Paul had written to them "according to the wisdom given him" (2 Peter 3:15), that is, presumably, divine wisdom from the Holy Spirit

(a) **1 Corinthians 2:12–13 (ESV)** ¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

(2) Second, he said Paul wrote the same way "in all his letters" (2 Peter 3:16). This indicates that not only was Peter aware of an already established collection of Paul's writings in circulation, he also was aware that his audience knew and possessed those same writings.²⁸

(3) Third, he noted that even false teachers had been using Paul's writings. These men, interpreting them wrongly, literally were "untaught" (v. 16 NASB). This suggests that while the early

²⁶ Blount, Douglas K. et al. "How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth." *Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. Ed. Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Svelig. I. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. 51. Print.

²⁷ Blount, Douglas K. et al. "How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth." *Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. Ed. Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Svelig. I. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. 52. Print.

²⁸ Blount, Douglas K. et al. "How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth." *Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. Ed. Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Svelig. I. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. 52. Print.

Christians were using Paul's writings for instruction in sound doctrine, the false teachers, who hadn't learned what Paul's more difficult writings meant, were distorting their meanings.

- (4) Fourth, Peter equated Paul's authoritative writings with Old Testament Scriptures in saying that the distorters "twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures" (v. 16). The term translated "other" (Greek *loipos*) refers to the remaining members of the same category.²⁹ Thus, around AD 65 Peter already placed Paul's writings in the category of the Old Testament Scriptures.

j) 2 Thess 2:15 – Keeping the good traditions

i) 2 Thessalonians 2:15 (ESV) ¹⁵ So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.

- (1) As Paul told the believers in Thessalonica, "Stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter" (2:15). The word *traditions* simply mean "things handed down." Notice that the source of these traditions is the apostles themselves, either their spoken teachings or written words (in their letters).
- (2) This demonstrates a couple of factors key to both the doctrine of Scripture and the doing of theology. First, about Scripture, we've already seen that the New Testament writings were accepted as authoritative because the apostles penned or approved them. Paul's instructions (2:15) reinforce this view of the authoritative nature of apostolic teachings and writings in the very first Christian communities. No wonder they copied, shared, and collected these writings so quickly in the church's history!
- (3) Second, note that the Thessalonians were to read the writings of the apostles in line with the oral teachings ("sound doctrine") they'd already received. In fact, a few verses earlier, when Paul was delivering some details about prophetic events, he said, "Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?" (v. 5). In other words, they were fully expected (and encouraged) to read that writing of Paul in light of their good theology—in light of good, sound, trustworthy oral tradition (v. 15). Only then would they be able to better understand the writings and not find themselves led astray by false teachings and false writings.
- (4) The same is true for those who do theology today. The same Spirit who gifted apostles and prophets also has given to the church evangelists, pastors, and teachers for building up Christ's body through their teaching. Throughout the church's history, those Spirit-gifted teachers have lived and died for the faith, bestowing upon future generations a massive cache of theological and practical wisdom learned often through trial and error. This kind of "tradition," though not inspired and inerrant like the writings of the apostles themselves, nevertheless can help Christians to think and to live better.³⁰

4) Facts to never forget

- a) God is knowable and has made Himself known
- b) God reveals Himself through various means
- c) Scripture is true in all that it affirms
- d) Jesus is the center and goal of scripture
- e) The goal of theology is transformation not just information

5) Dangers to avoid

- a) Unnecessary Elective surgery
 - i) Acts 20:27 (ESV) ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

²⁹ See entry in Walter Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).²⁹

³⁰ Blount, Douglas K. et al. "How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth." *Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. Ed. Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Svigel. I. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. 55. Print.

- b) Watered down wine
- i) Isaiah 1:21–23 (ESV) ²¹ How the faithful city has become a whore, she who was full of justice! Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers. ²² Your silver has become dross, your best wine mixed with water. ²³ Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not bring justice to the fatherless, and the widow’s cause does not come to them.
- c) Hearing without hearing
- i) Isaiah 6:8–13 (ESV) ⁸ And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.” ⁹ And he said, “Go, and say to this people: “ ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’ ¹⁰ Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.” ¹¹ Then I said, “How long, O Lord?” And he said: “Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, ¹² and the Lord removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. ¹³ And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled.” The holy seed is its stump.
- d) Cold, dead orthodoxy
- i) Kierkegaard said it well: “What Christianity wants [i.e., lacks] is ... the following of Christ.”⁵ The danger, in other words, is this: we can affirm that Scripture is truth, and then fail to let that truth change us.³¹
 - ii) Revelation 3:1–3 (ESV) ¹ “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: ‘The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. “ ‘I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. ² Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. ³ Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.
- e) Arrogant reading
- i) Some folks try to read Scripture in idiosyncratic, illegitimate, personally beneficial ways. Sometimes it shows up in theories of interpretation that give the reader authority over the text; this seems particularly prevalent with certain scholarly works in which an author seeks desperately to avoid the message in the text with pet theories and “expert” testimony. This is upside down. We, the readers of Scripture, are *not* the creators of its meaning, which is not open to our intents and purposes. The meaning is there because God, its ultimate Author, inspired words that have the meaning He intended. The community of faith’s time-tested way to interpret Scripture is with a “grammatical-historical” approach. We seek to understand the grammatical context, in its literary context, and in its historical context. *God* has spoken, so we need to comprehend what His Word actually means; we ignore grammar, genre, style, rhetorical devices, or setting only at our peril.³²
 - ii) 2 Peter 1:20 (ESV) ²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation.

⁵ Ibid., 123.

³¹ Blount, Douglas K. et al. “How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth.” *Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. Ed. Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Svingel. I. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. 82. Print.

³² Blount, Douglas K. et al. “How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth.” *Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. Ed. Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Svingel. I. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. 83. Print.

- f) Doctrineless Discipleship
- i) We sometimes lose sight of the reality that doctrine is the very basis of discipleship. Showing others “how to behave morally” isn’t even distinctively Christian—a great many people from a vast array of creeds seek to improve their social comportment and better their moral behavior. What *is* distinctively Christian is showing others how to follow Jesus by knowing the teachings of God’s Word and then, knowing what He requires, to obey Him.³³
 - ii) Titus 1:9 (ESV)⁹ He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.
- g) Christian polesitting
- i) When we read the Bible, even when we read the Bible *alone*, we should never read it in *isolation*. Every heretic who ever lived became one by *not* engaging God’s Word with the accountability of others—in a supportive community of believers, with the goal of growing together and exhorting one another to stay true to the faith “once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). False teachers and errant followers sprout from the soil of individualistic, separatist, and isolationist approaches to faith and practice.³⁴
 - ii) Hebrews 10:24–25 (ESV)²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

³³ Blount, Douglas K. et al. “How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth.” *Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. Ed. Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Svigel. I. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. 84. Print.

³⁴ Blount, Douglas K. et al. “How Firm a Foundation: Revelation, Scripture, and Truth.” *Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. Ed. Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Svigel. I. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014. 85. Print.