

LESSON ESSENTIALS

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

LESSON 4: THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

Everyone in this world wants answers. We all have questions and concerns that we want resolved. Where can people look for those answers? As Christians, why is it imperative that we look to the Bible for answers?

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

An essential doctrine of the Christian faith is the inerrancy of the Bible and the authority of scripture. God speaks to His people through the Bible, these words spoken by God Himself to His prophets, apostles, priests, and disciples.

We need to know what God says about Himself so that we can come to know and to love Him more. But we also need to know what God says about us so that we can more fully understand the state of our relationship with Him. The Bible is God's love letter to His people

Have you ever received a letter from someone you love? How many times did you read it? Did you keep it for a long time? Did you learn something new about them in what they had written?

Have you ever purchased an item that came with an instruction manual? Did you read it to understand how to properly use the item and how to make the most of it? Did you keep it on hand for future reference in case of trouble or breakdown in the future?

Maybe you have received written directions from a boss or instructor. You know that your job or education depends upon your understanding and following those instructions, so you keep the list and refer to it often, ensuring that you are doing what your supervisor desires.

While all of these analogies break down at some level, there is a parallel to be made between these written communications and the Word of God. An essential doctrine of the Christian faith is the inerrancy of the Bible and the authority of scripture. God speaks to His people through the Bible, these words spoken by God Himself to His prophets, apostles, priests, and disciples. These words have been carefully preserved for millennia, recorded, translated, and transcribed with great care. Much has been written that proves the accuracy of the Bible as we have it today, and so we will not study that evidence in this lesson. What does need to be examined is why it is essential that true Christians believe in the authority of God's Word.

We need to know what God says about Himself so that we can come to know and to love Him more. But we also need to know what God says about us so that we can more fully understand the state of our relationship with Him. The Bible is God's love letter to His people. He has written out His promises for His people, He has expressed His thoughts about us, He has revealed Himself in all His glory, and He has communicated the risk and consequence there is for us if we do not persevere in our relationship with Him. This is all a communication of His love for His people.

We need to know what God says about His creation and His kingdom so that we know some of His purpose in this life. We get to know how we ought to use and participate in the world He has created and what the purpose of this world is. As we come to see that the purpose of all of creation is to glorify God, we come to understand how to function in this life when things go badly. Our God has not left us without a game plan or a

clear purpose for this life. He reveals His will and His plan to use through His Word.

Also, we need to understand the rules of living in God's world. We need to know what He requires of His creation, and what obedience looks like. We need to understand our directions of how to live and how to reflect His character to a watching world. We need to know the parameters for relationships in His world and how we ought to love one another.

This might sound like an impressive list, but if we do not hold to the doctrine of the authority of scripture then it is simply a list of good ideas or potential advice. What happens when the world or our culture or our friends give us advice and instructions to follow that are contrary to what seems right to us? What if we hear multiple conflicting pieces of advice from outside sources? We need to believe that there is one authoritative source of wisdom and instruction, and the true Christian knows that that is the Bible – the very Word of God.

When there are other worldviews fighting for our attention, or decisions that need to be made, or too much advice being given from too many advisors, the Christian can check and compare all of these voices to the authority of the Bible knowing that the Word of God gets the final word. What a peace of mind this brings to know and to hold to the truth that there is one source that never gives faulty instruction! Holding fast to the essential doctrine of the authority and inerrancy of the Bible is foundational for defending all the other essential doctrines of the Christian faith. Times may change, but the Word of God endures forever (1 Peter 1:25).

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IN REVIEW

- The Bible is God's very words recorded for us so that we can know His thoughts and plans as He has chosen to reveal them.
- The Bible explains our relationship with God, with others, and with creation and gives us parameters within which to function for God's glory and for our good.
- The authority and inerrancy of the Bible gives us confidence and assurance when we are faced with multiple, conflicting pieces of information and advice. Because of the Word of God, we can test all the opinions presented to us and we can know what agrees with God's revealed will.
- All flesh may fail, the world will change around us, but the Word of God endures forever.

HAVE YOUR SAY

- Are there portions of scripture that you have difficulty believing in or agreeing with? The Lord does not give us the option of picking and choosing which parts we will believe. Pray and ask the Lord for the humility to embrace all of His Word and to choose to love and obey all of it, not only the parts that are convenient or that fit with our preconceived notions of rightness.

- Are there decisions that you need to make right now? Where are you looking for advice? Take time now to pray about your decision and to check the options you are considering with the Word of God. What does the Bible say about your situation? Does the advice you are getting agree with or contradict God's written word? Ask for discernment to understand God's will as it is revealed in the pages of scripture.

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