

“Living As Bereans” Part One Making The Bible Central

In the year AD 50, as part of Paul’s second missionary trip, the apostle preached in a Thessalonian synagogue for three Sabbaths (Acts 17:1-2). Because of a Jewish-incited mob, Paul, Silas, and Timothy were forced to leave the city and were sent under cover of night to Berea (50 miles to the southwest) where Paul taught in the synagogue (Acts 17:5-10). We are told that the Bereans, being more noble-minded than the Thessalonians, examined the scriptures daily to see if what Paul said was true. Many believed, including several prominent Greek women and men. 17:11-12

Because of this powerful account that Luke writes, throughout history the Bereans have become synonymous with those who make the Bible central to their lives, who study the scriptures, and who make the Word the ultimate source of authority. This is so because some key truths stand out in that passage. First, even though it was the Apostle Paul who was teaching them, they believed there was a need to search the scriptures to discern the validity of his message. Second, the fact that they did not ask other leaders, they did not search their own hearts or consciences (or any other source), but they searched the scriptures demonstrates as strongly as any other biblical incident the Reformers’ principle of *Sola Scriptura* (“Only Scripture”), that the Bible alone is to be our only ultimate source of authority.

Why should the Bible be our only ultimate source of authority? It comes down to six characteristics which are true of the Bible that we should explore. We will take up three in this reading and three in our next one.

The Bible Is Inspired

First, the Bible is “breathed out by God” (2 Tim. 3:16) or “inspired”. This means that it is from God, which is why the scriptures are often called “the word of God” (cf. Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12). The scriptures were written as “men...were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:21) God’s Spirit carried along these men and worked through their personalities, experience, education, and various styles so that the end product, even down to each word, is from God.

When Paul writes in 2 Tim. 3:16 that “all scripture is breathed out by God,” he is referring to the Old Testament scriptures.



2 Tim. 3:16-17: “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 competent, equipped for every good work.”

However, the New Testament scriptures are equated with the Old Testament scriptures in the following ways:

- In 2 Peter 3:16 Peter equates Paul's writings with the Old Testament scriptures.
- 1 Tim. 5:18 makes it clear that Paul viewed the content of the words of Jesus (i.e. what we find in the Gospels) as equal to the scriptures.
- That which the Apostles proclaimed was the "word of God" (cf. Acts 6:2, 7; 8:14; 11:1; 12:24; 13:46, et al)

Since this is the case, we can apply Paul's words with confidence to the New Testament as well.

The Bible Is Infallible

The Apostle Peter teaches that we should, "like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk..." (1 Peter 2:2) Here, the Word is compared to the milk an infant consumes, i.e. that which is good, which does not contain contaminants. In other words, it does not lead one astray. It communicates truth.

"Infallibility means that something cannot err, while inerrancy means that it does not err." -R. C. Sproul, [What Is Reformed Theology?](#)

Bottom-line, the scriptures should be searched like treasure since the benefits are so many (Prov. 2:1-15).

The Bible Is Inerrant

Finally, since the scriptures are all from God, we must also conclude that they are absolutely accurate. After all, God knows all things (Ps. 139:2-6) and does not lie (Titus 1:2). Since this is the case, then we must conclude that in the original autographs they are "without error". As the 1978 Chicago Statement On Biblical Inerrancy states:

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.

Two Questions

All three of these characteristics show us that the scriptures are authoritative, accurate, true, and can be trusted. Yet, a couple questions may nag at us in this discussion. First, why is it said that the scriptures are without error in the original autographs? This is important because it is the original autographs which God inspired. What is more, to the degree that the original has been changed in the copies, we do not have the inerrant message. Though this is true, we must also affirm that the manuscripts we have are so reliable and our versions we read are done so well,

The original autographs consist of each original finished book written by the biblical author. Manuscripts are the hand-written copies of those originals. All ancient writings were hand-copied since the printing press was not invented until the 15th century.

for all practical purposes, what we have in front of us is the inspired, inerrant scriptures.

This leads to our second question: “Should we trust our English versions we read? The answer is yes based upon our strong manuscript evidence that enables us to come very close to reconstructing the originals. The answer is also yes due to the way our versions are translated. The main versions we read (e.g. ESV, NASB, NIV, NLT) have been translated from Greek and Hebrew manuscripts by large teams of scholars who check many times over each other’s work. Each individual book of these versions is translated by a team of scholars comprised of experts in that particular book.

We also must realize that different versions take different approaches to translation philosophy. The New Living Translation is a dynamic equivalent translation that has translated concept-by-concept in such a way that the messages are smoothed out for ease of understanding. The NASB, on the other hand, is a formally equivalent translation which strives to translate more word-for-word, even if it remains awkward or harder to understand. The ESV is closer to the formal equivalency approach with a more appealing use of the English language than the NASB. The NIV is closer to the dynamically equivalent end of things, yet, not as far in that direction as the NLT. Though these versions take different approaches, nevertheless, they can be trusted to convey accurately the original message.

“Briefly stated, the theory of dynamic equivalence in Bible translation emphasizes *the reaction of the reader* to the translated text, rather than *the translation of the words and phrases* themselves. In simplest terms, [it] is often referred to as ‘thought for thought’ translation as compared to ‘essentially literal’ translation....” - Leland Ryken, [The Word Of God In English](#)

Family Discussion:

1. What did the Bereans see as their only ultimate source of authority and why?
2. What three characteristics of the Bible did we discuss? Can you support each one from the Bible?
3. Do you have any questions about any of the characteristics?
4. Share which version each of you prefers and why.