

The Inerrancy and Infallibility of Scripture

By Micah Hackett
www.InsidetheBible.ca

Through the centuries men and women of God have both devoted and sacrificed their lives for the sake of a book they deemed worthy. This book, of course, is the Bible. They did not see a book from man, nor a book corrupted by man: they saw words from God. In that this book embodied God's words, it was reliable, even life-changing.

Today, however, academia is far too enlightened (so they say) to give Scripture such high honour. Standing on the backs of so-called great critics of the past century or two, scholars have apparently invalidated worn-out concepts like the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture, even its inspiration to an extent. "The book is honourable, yes, but it is not wholly without error. That would be silly."

Rather than standing firm, evangelicals too are caught bringing in subtle compromises in this issue. Especially today, it is the Christian's obligation to stand for an error-free, binding God-breathed Scripture. We must be those people.

An Introduction to the Terms

At one point in time, inerrancy and infallibility were interchangeable terms. They essentially referred to a state of being reliable and unable to err. Now, they are generally recognized as having different emphases. Compromised scholars have seen infallibility as applying only to the faith-related claims of Scripture, but not its historical and scientific claims; whereas, they see inerrancy as applying to all propositions of Scripture. Thus, to them infallibility is easier to believe in that it makes the Bible a mere religious book, not threatened by scholarly criticism. This article promotes the following definitions, as opposed to the above.

Inerrancy states that Scripture *does not* err in any of its propositions: in all of its parts, it corresponds as a matter of fact to what really is. Infallibility states that Scripture *cannot* err in any of its propositions. It holds immunity from error, illegitimacy, or failure. It is fully certain, reliable, and trustworthy regarding both facts and faith. Not only is it true, but it is binding. Both of these terms involve the full reliability of the original Scriptures in every part. Both are true because they stem from the God-breathed nature of Scripture.

They can be differentiated this way:

1. To say prophecy is true because it was fulfilled promotes inerrancy. To say the prophecy was fulfilled because it was true promotes infallibility. The same distinction can be made with Christ's sinlessness, for example. Was Christ sinless because He did not sin? Or did Christ not sin because He was sinless? Both are true, but the emphasis is different.
2. Inerrancy flows from infallibility, but infallibility does not flow from inerrancy. For instance, an address book could possibly be without error (inerrant), but it would suddenly contain error once a person moved. However, if it were infallible, it would remain without error, because that information would define the residents rather than merely describe them accurately.

3. Inerrancy is true, because God cannot lie about anything; thus, Scripture is accurate. Infallibility is true, because God defines reality; thus, Scripture is unbreakable. Really, God cannot lie, because He defines reality.

The Biblical Doctrine of Inerrancy

Though the word “inerrant” is not in Scripture, the principle is clearly there. It comes from the same interpretation method by which the Trinity is believed. The Trinity is clear for at least two reasons: (1) All of Scripture taken together clearly tells us that it exists, though a single text is not devoted to explaining it. (2) The doctrine is an assumption in the New Testament, rather than a thing to be proven. Not only does the Trinity hold weight, but it gives weight to the rest of Scripture. The same is true of inerrancy. Scripture is clear about it when taken as a whole. But the assumption also is the basis for anything said of Scripture in Old and New Testaments.

Further, it has to exist when a correct view of inspiration is held. If God breathed the very words, and even the smallest particles, of Scripture, and if God cannot lie, then no part of Scripture can err. If Scripture can err, either God is a liar or God did not inspire the very words. Neither are Biblical views.

So then, Christians believe inerrancy based on three main pillars:

1. It is Biblical (when the text of Scripture is honestly taken together).
2. It is Necessary (when the assumptions of biblical writers are observed).
3. It is Logical (when a correct view of inspiration is embraced).

Inerrancy as a concept is stated clearly in Scripture. Psalm 12:6 says, “The words of the Lord are pure words [flawless words, absolutely reliable]: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.” Notice this text emphasizes the words of the Lord twice over. His regular words (whatever proceeds from His mouth at any time) are defined as being flawless and pure words. There is no difference between partially-reliable words and fully-reliable words. When God speaks at all, He speaks with fullest reliability and accuracy. This cannot allow for any error in Scripture (presupposing Biblical inspiration), whether historical, scientific, or religious. How can “silver purified seven times” mean anything less than *absolute* purity? How is it possible for the words of God to be alloyed and tainted by the words of men? It is impossible.

Other Scriptures state it clearly as well, such as Revelation 21:5, “And He said unto me, ‘Write: for these words are true and faithful.’” Men record already words that are partially true; so it would be no incentive for John to write if the Lord meant partial accuracy when he said, “These words are true.” The Lord meant full truth, full accuracy, and full reliability. The Lord attested to this in his prayer as well, when He said, “Sanctify them by Your truth: Your word is truth” in John 17:17. Scripture is inerrant.

If that were not enough, Scripture not only attests to the fact of inerrancy, but it describes the extent of inerrancy. For instance, the Lord told the disciples in John 14:26, “He [the Holy Spirit] shall teach you all things and bring all things to your memory, whatsoever I have said unto you.” How can “all things” mean anything less than “all”? Further, Psalm 33:4 says, “The word of the Lord is right, and all His works are done in truth.” If inerrancy is not true, “right” has no meaningful significance and “all His works” is a lie. God could not but produce a wholly

accurate Scripture.

Finally, not only is inerrancy stated and qualified, but it is applied. This has to mean people actually believed in it. Proverbs 30:5-6 is extremely clear: "Every word of God is pure [is tested, proves true]. He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him. Add not unto His words, lest He reprove you, and you be found a liar." Evidently, the writer believed in inerrancy and shunned the danger of man's tampering with it. If "every word of God is pure," then no word of God can be misleading or inaccurate, even regarding history and science. The danger is not that God has given a partially accurate Scripture; the danger comes when man gets involved. "Add not unto His words" is exactly the command men violate when they deny inerrancy. It is men who will be proven liars when their word contradicts God. Contradictions *in* the Bible are not the worry of the Christian; contradictions *of* the Bible are what become truly problematic. The psalmist said it well: "As for God, His way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried. He is a buckler to all those that trust in Him." (Ps. 18:30). Perhaps Romans 3 would be a good place to end this section and lead us into the problems that arise when men tamper with this doctrine.

What advantage then has the Jew? or what profit is there in circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith[fulness] of God without effect? May it never be: indeed, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That You might be justified in Your sayings, and might overcome when You are judged. (Emphasis added, Romans 3:1-4).

Why Full Inerrancy is Necessary

The theologian who denies inerrancy is faced with certain foundational problems that he cannot wish away. He has to be inconsistent in how he interprets Scripture, he has to form a conviction about errors in the Bible apart from the Bible itself, and he has to nullify the true weight and authority of Scripture.

The liberal theologian would often claim personal reverence toward Scripture's spiritual teachings, but he would not support inerrancy in the scientific and historical realm. He arrives at a problem, however, because doctrine is based on history. This is not to say history merely illustrates doctrine (such as the brass serpent in John 3:14), but history actually defines doctrine in many cases. For instance, Romans 9, 10, and 11 are deeply theological, but they concern Israel's past, present, and future – historical matters. Adam's fall is both historical and theological as well. So are the virgin birth, miracles, Babel, the Flood, the Exodus, and so many other events. The most prominent instance in which doctrine is based on history is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The liberal theologian will claim, "Yes, but these are foundational. We are contesting the non-essentials of the Bible's claims." Firstly, who decides what is non-essential? There is no way to be consistent in this. Secondly, is not the integrity of God in all of His words foundational regardless of their content? So then, the question is, What is the Christian to do with doctrine that is based on history? How can a Christian be consistent in denying certain historical facts, while embracing with certainty theological facts based on history? He cannot be consistent. The fact that doctrine is based on history makes the Bible rise or fall as a whole.

Furthermore, this touches the personal sphere as well. What does a liberal do with “inspirational” Bible promises that are based on facts? If God could not record history correctly through human instrumentation, why should one believe His predictions? As well, what does a liberal do with instructional Bible verses that are based on the events of one's life (Hebrews 11, for example)? Does Scripture not lose its relevance if it is not real? The liberal claims he can dismiss inerrancy while maintaining a “good Christian life.” He is wrong. He may live religiously, but Christianity is a doctrinal thing. Christianity is based on realities through which God teaches and strengthens us. Inerrancy is for practical living as much as it is for Christian belief structure.

Another question inerrancy deniers must answer is this: why was it so dangerous to take from the words of Revelation, as set forth in 22:18-19? Notice the intensity expressed in that passage:

For I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the tree of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Why would God be concerned with preserving the entirety of a book that was full of symbols? He was adamant about this because every word holds the significance of divine authority. If God curses men for taking away symbols that point to facts, why would there be no consequence to taking away pure historical facts themselves? By liberal standards, Revelation is probably a “least” book in Scripture because of its “confusing” nature; why, then, would God be concerned with preserving every word in, of all books, Revelation? Surely every word of God matters to Him in every genre; it is man's tampering that is the danger, not God's failure to give clarity and truth when He speaks. Again, “Let God be true, and every man a liar.”

And the problems for the liberal continue, because there is no reason to reject inerrancy from the attitude of Scripture itself. Liberal scholars reject it because of higher-critical observations looming *over* the text, not derived *from* the text. They will claim to uphold the spiritual parts of Scripture, but inconsistency arises when this is done.

Firstly, Scripture nowhere denies inerrancy; in fact, it positively affirms it in unison. Notice what the liberal must believe in light of this: he must believe both that his views are superior to Scripture's positive witness to inerrancy and that any Biblical passage affirming inerrancy is in error, even if it came from the lips of Christ. Thus, he deems Biblical science and history unreliable, as well as theological portions that touch the doctrine of Scripture. The liberal cannot avoid this: if Biblical science and history are liable to err, so are Biblical doctrines. Thus, we are left with a *completely* unreliable Bible, both historically and theologically. Evidently it does rise or fall together. A student or scholar is inconsistent, ignorant, and arrogant who claims to believe Scripture's theology but not its facts. Its theology loses significance once its facts do, since theology claims a text unliable to err.

Secondly, Scripture nowhere denies plenary verbal inspiration; rather it affirms it. Inerrancy is built upon the claim that God breathed the very words of Scripture. To reject inerrancy is to embrace one of two claims: (1) that God can lie (if He inspired the very words), (2) that Scripture is not inspired in its words and is inspired in only some of its concepts.

According to option one, God is all-knowing: if He contradicted what is true, He would know it and be deceiving deliberately. A liberal would probably not consider himself a Christian if he viewed God as a deceiver. Thus, option two is probably better in his mind. He encounters the same problem as he did with inerrancy, however, because Scripture affirms inspiration clearly. Thus, he denies another facet of the Bible's theology.

This, then, is what the liberal has to do when rejecting inerrancy. He has to reject that Scripture is inspired in its words and is only inspired in some of its thoughts. On this basis, he has to believe that both science and history are liable to err, as well as theology that does not fit with his higher-critical views. All of this must be true to deny "just the science and history of Scripture." A question arises at this point: why embrace the Bible and Christianity at all? There is no true reason other than preference. Scripture defines itself by total reliability and total origination from God. Once these two pillars are rejected (however subtly) Scripture ceases to be what it claims to be and is no more significant than the writings of Plato or some random sage.

This is what happens when man tampers with something that is supernatural. He becomes the judge of it. Even if some parts of Scripture were inspired (in the liberal worldview), who would decide which parts were? The liberal would, of course. Then man has to become the ultimate authority on Scripture. Imagine: this all starts when "non-essential" science and history in the Bible are compromised.

Ultimately, there is no unique spiritual value to a text that did not fully come from God and that is not truly reliable (in all of its parts). Since God is sovereign, every text in the world plays some role in His grand scheme. As well, every book has some measure of truth in it. These have no distinct value, though. Yet this is what the Bible is reduced to if it is only vaguely from God and only partially reliable.

We are still left needing an infallible rule of faith. What, then, becomes that rule? Academia? The Roman Catholic Church? God? Surely it would be better to have God guide, rather than a system of man. If only He would speak! But wait. He has. One should not call himself a conservative or consistent Christian if he is going to tamper with this issue. There is nothing conservative, consistent, or helpful with denying inerrancy.

Dealing with Bible Difficulties

If one is to claim, as above, that the Bible is fully without error, he must be ready to defend his claim on a practical level. To be conservative is not equivalent to being naive or ignorant. Thus, one who stands for inerrancy should be competent when addressing Bible difficulties.

Before entering into this field, the Christian must be sure he is addressing legitimate issues. Many skeptics presuppose Scripture's error, and argue based on that foundation. Many simply desire to waste time by arguing with unfounded claims and hypotheticals. In order to sift through the nonsense of many skeptics, Christians should learn to put them on the defensive first and see if they have a basis for their claims. Skeptics often bring their weapons but have no ammunition; though they do not succeed in discrediting Scripture, they often do succeed in wasting valuable time. As believers, we are to beware of this. We should first attack the skeptic's foundation to eliminate nonsense that we don't simply have time to defend against.

But there are real questions that both believers and unbelievers have about apparent Bible contradictions and difficulties. These are better addressed, not as individual issues, but as categories to deal with as a whole.

Difficulties Between Texts. Difficulties between texts occur when specific details in parallel accounts differ. These happen in a few main areas.

- Skeptics will point out differences in genealogies as evidence of error. For example, Luke 3 records the son of Arphaxad as being “Cainan,” but 1 Chronicles 1 (and all other records) records him as “Salah.” The solution is easily explained, however. Firstly, not all genealogies in Scripture were meant to be complete; often they exist to prove lineage, rather than exhaustively define it. Secondly, though “father” by default refers to a biological source, it is also used to denote ancestry (Matthew 1:1). Thirdly, it was not impossible for a scribe to copy a genealogy wrongly, since lists are especially difficult to copy accurately. Thus, a scribe's eye could have slipped back to “Cainan” in verse 37 on the manuscript he was copying, causing him to copy it again. This is likely what happened in this passage.
- Quotations also may pose an issue to some in that the New Testament often quotes Old Testament passages loosely. This poses no problem, since loose quotation was and is acceptable for proving a point. But the other factor to consider is what the apostles were referencing for their quotations. Often they were quoting the Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the “Septuagint,” whereas we read the translation of the Hebrew itself. This would allow for different, but similar, renderings of the same passage.
- Numbers also compose a category of textual difference which we must be aware of. There is an example in the account of the Transfiguration. Luke says it was “about eight days” after Jesus' previous words. Matthew and Mark say, “after six days.” Notice the wording, though: Matthew and Mark are referring to the days that passed between the events, while Luke is speaking about the general time covered from the time of Christ's words to the event. Luke uses “about,” while the others use “after.” Obviously one includes the two peripheral days, while the others record the intermittent days only. Another example is in the consequences of David's pride in 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21. Samuel mentions “seven years of famine” while the Chronicler mentions “three years of famine.” This has two simple explanations: (1) the number could have been miscopied, since the difference between three and seven in Hebrew are denoted by one line. (2) 2 Samuel 21 records three years of famine that already happened. To add the year of David's sin to the three years of famine as a result of his sin, one will have seven years. Thus, the author may have purposefully written “seven” to include the previous years of famine as well. Overall, either an understanding of manuscript transmission or attention to detail will solve numeric difficulties. At times, numeric differences are only an omission or deliberate emphasis and not an error (Legion in Matthew 8 and in Luke 8).
- Parallel accounts also can emphasize or record different factors than their counterparts. Incidents include the order of Christ's appearances after the resurrection, the title above Christ's cross, who tempted David to take the census,

and other such. Often these are solved when we realize there are not “either/or” but “both/and.” In other words, they are not contradictions but accounts that must be combined to give full force of the true happening. After all, if the records were word-for-word the same, would not the skeptic accuse God of useless repetition? These texts are deliberately variant, not because they are in error, but because they are purposed to convey a specific emphasis. If one assumes error, he will see error. If one assumes inspiration, he will see God's design.

Difficulties Between Themes. Scripture is a multi-faceted book, addressing many themes from many different angles. As we look at these themes from different perspectives, we will notice variations from one passage to another. These, however, are not contradictions, but differences in emphasis and context.

- At times there will be distinction between God's dealings with man in the Old Testament and God's dealings with man in the New Testament. God has deliberately changed his pattern of administration from age to age to reveal the many capacities of the human heart and display His manifold glory. The Bible is not simply “the Christian's Rule-Book.” It is a revelation of God and his purposes in Creation. Thus, we would expect variations in the ways He has dealt with and commanded men through the ages. These are not contradictions, but deliberate changes.
- Skeptics will also point out differences in the teaching of Scripture. For instance, Psalm 121 says that God never sleeps, while Matthew 4 records the Lord Jesus sleeping. First of all, Psalm 121:4 is a metaphor, because not only does God *not* sleep, but He *cannot* sleep. It is not really referring to the doctrine of God's sleeplessness. He is always in control, and that is the point. Secondly, Psalm 121 was not written in the context of the Son of God Who took on flesh. While “God is not a man,” that does not mean He could not become a man and take on full humanity while retaining full Deity. We must understand Scripture's teaching in its own context established by the passage.
- At times, as well, Scripture will present differing commands. For instance, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7 that it is not good to marry. But Paul says in 1 Timothy 4 that false teachers will command to abstain from marriage. Again, the issue is context. In 1 Corinthians, Paul was suggesting against marriage in light of a specific setting. In 1 Timothy, Paul was supporting marriage as a morally upright institution to oppose the false teachers, which were forbidding it. Again, the setting of a passage is everything.

Difficulties in Concepts. At times, there will be objections to Scripture that are not rooted in Scripture at all, but rather in the finite mind of the individual. Two examples will be given since they are the most common.

- Within conservative Christianity, it seems no subject is so controversial as the balance between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. These topics often appear side by side (see Matthew 11:25-30, Romans 9-11, John 6:35-51, 2 Peter 1:16-21, and Luke 8:40-56) and in their own emphasis. There is no “solution” to this paradox, because no solution is needed. These concepts do not contradict each other; we simply do not have the knowledge to understand them together. Thus, we must accept both and

- embrace the mystery of the thing.
- The same applies to the two natures of Christ and the fact of His full deity alongside His full humanity. How do they relate? How do we align them fully? We do not know. We simply accept both His deity and His humanity and enjoy both individually without diminishing either. Could we not expect such depths from the infinite God? Why would this be considered a “difficulty”?

Difficulties in Social Perception. Most Bible difficulties arise, because people implant the present into the past, thinking the two are completely parallel. This is called anachronism. Anachronism happens mainly with social norms. Since social norms are held much by emotion and not logic, skeptics will rarely look at the issues objectively. Objectivity is necessary.

- Many accuse Scripture of supporting slavery; however, the slavery of the Bible is far different from the slavery of America. The slavery of the Bible was not by kidnapping, but rather by one's will. In fact, not only does Scripture forbid kidnapping, but it gives safety parameters for slavery (Exodus 21). It does not support racism of any sort, nor cruelty. In fact, God told Israel to remember their slavery in order to avoid that kind of behaviour toward others. With these two factors, the slavery of the Bible becomes a social order, not a sinful practice as in recent centuries.
- The conquest of Canaan and the slaughter entailed also brings objection. However, we must understand that God withheld judgment for a long time on the nations (Gen. 15:16). Their sin merited judgment on the whole race, as with Sodom and Gomorrah. As regards the killing of women and children, the women were just as guilty as the men, while the children were saved (through death) from sinning against God later in life. There was no injustice involved on God's part. As to the mode, the slaughter would remind Israel of the sinfulness of sin.
- Some see the awkward passages of the Bible as a reason to reject it. However, its honesty with the way things really were is evidence of its inerrancy. Scripture was not meant to be a book of inspirational stories. It deals with real life. This includes the many cultures it spans. We cannot fault it for dealing with things as they are.

Difficulties in Spiritual Perception. This is where we find the real issue. The unsaved man has no appreciation of Scripture, because it was not written to comply to his standards. Where man either feels ignorant or convicted, he will blame his problem on the Bible. The cross is foolishness to the unbelieving mind. Headship and gender roles are arbitrary to the unbelieving mind. Creation is a superstition to the unbelieving mind. The sinfulness of sin, the holiness of God, and the judgment of God – none of these concepts make sense to man, because he is blinded to spiritual realities. These issues are not actually problematic, but unbelief turns them into “difficulties” because hatred for God will find any reason to criticize Him.

While it would be nearly impossible to recall and refute all possible “difficulties,” we can learn to be generally competent in the field. Briefly, then, here are ten principles for dealing with Bible difficulties:

1. Be spiritual. Nothing substitutes for hours spent in the presence of God and in the study of His Word. Nothing substitutes for an appreciation of God's glory and His

salvation. A defender of the faith must be a worshiper primarily; otherwise, he is defending a system, not so much the gospel.

2. Be an able handler of Scripture. Most difficulties result from ignorance. Thus, it will be invaluable to have a working knowledge of Scripture's contents and its teachings. No formal education will substitute for being a faithful student of the Scriptures.
3. Learn to love the big picture. We must remember that every passage in Scripture has a context in the overall plan of God. If we are mindful of this plan, we will more easily understand the individual passages, especially the ones that seem "difficult."
4. Learn to struggle with a text and be strengthened as a result. In the age of all things instant, we have somewhat lost the skill of meditating on a text of Scripture at length. Yet only when we "struggle" with a text does it have true impact on our hearts. Difficulties are only resolved as we pay attention to the fine details of Scripture. And when they are resolved, we gain immense strength, having discovered another facet of God's precision in Scripture.
5. Be offensive as well as defensive. People will question Christianity to no end. If we subject ourselves to that, nothing will be accomplished. We must learn to defend, yes, but we must also learn to attack the weaknesses of other positions. Otherwise, our conversations will always be controlled by unbelief.
6. Learn to admit ignorance, and then pursue the answer. No one has all the answers, and neither will we. If we do not know the answer to a question, we cannot (a) fabricate an answer, (b) ignore it, or (c) say there is no answer. It is fine to address it at a later point. There is nothing wrong with saying, "I haven't looked into that as much as I would have liked. Let me study that for a while, and I will get back to you with an answer."
7. Learn to address Bible "contradictions" with precision. In other words, make sure the texts are actually talking about the exact same thing. Be thorough in looking into the issue. Often contradictions are simply oversights on the part of the reader.
8. Understand the multi-faceted nature of Scripture. God did not design Scripture to be exhaustive in every one of its statements. Some statements address one part of the issue, while statements elsewhere address the other part of the issue. These are not contradictions; these are just different emphases. Also, we should expect many sides to a theme in Scripture, since it speaks of eternal and infinite themes. These many sides contribute to a whole picture that we need to be looking for.
9. Understand the relationship between Old and New Testaments. The Bible student will be hopelessly lost if he treats the Old Testament the same way he treats the New Testament and vice versa. He must learn what God's purpose in each is and interpret them in light of it.
10. Learn to assess the hearer, keeping in mind his darkened heart. We have no right to assume that skepticism is objective, unbiased, and well-thought-through. Fallen man is blinded by Satan (2 Corinthians 4), is unable to comprehend the things of God (1 Corinthians 2), and is darkened in his intellect as a result of sin (Romans 1). There cannot be objectivity on his part, and we must be diligent to assess where his bias is. Helping a person along in Bible difficulties cannot be separated from evangelism

(unless to a Christian), which seeks to change the heart of the unbeliever. The goal is not to win an argument. The goal is to see a rebel transformed by the power of Christ.

What, then, are we to do in the mean time before we find the solution to a Bible difficulty? Firstly, we must keep in mind Scripture's positive proofs. The things that affirm it are far more weighty than the things that attempt to deny it. Secondly, we must remember that in history, when Scripture was given the "benefit of the doubt" it has been proven in the end. Thirdly, we must remember how we have experienced it to possess the authority and power of God. It is self-validating. It is self-proving. We must not forget this.

Furthermore, the existence of difficulties proves the Christian worldview. Firstly, the existence of skepticism is what Scripture predicted all along; thus, Scripture is consistent with reality and proven valid again. Secondly, when we find out that Scripture actually has no contradictions, what once were difficulties turn out to be marks of God's precision. Such precision validates Scripture once again.

We have no reason to be ashamed of inerrancy, even in light of Bible difficulties. Rather, we have every reason to defend it at all costs. God will not be mocked. He is not sloppy in His statements. He will not be proven wrong. When we neglect this, we will find contradictions (falsely so). When we embrace this, we will find design. Will we embrace what God has said?

The Foundation of Our Faith: Scripture's Infallibility

As we look at the summation of this topic, it will be helpful for us to leave with practical wisdom from Scripture. How does infallibility affect my life? How does it change my Christianity? A look at a few Scriptures will bring unmistakable clarity to those questions.

Firstly, infallibility means Scripture cannot be broken, but rather it breaks. The Lord said this in John 10:35, "The Scripture cannot be broken." It is fixed in its declarations, and no one will successfully discredit it. In what it affirms, it is real. In what it commands, it is authoritative. In fact, Scripture is so unmovable that it crushes all who stand against it.

In Jeremiah 23, the Lord opposes the false prophets who prophesied though God had not spoken through them. In verse 28, He speaks of the faithful prophets who communicate the Word of God in purity. "He that has my word, let him speak my word faithfully." Then He asks the question, "What is the chaff to the wheat?" In other words, He did not fear the words of the false prophets because when tested against the true prophecies, the lies would be exposed as being empty. It is at this point that the Lord says, "Is not my word like a fire? And like a hammer that breaks the rock into pieces?" Infallibility means man cannot successfully imitate what God alone gives. The Scriptures are marked with the stability and changelessness of God's authority. We must not subject it to the changing whims of man. Even Christians will succumb to trends, but we must—we must!—reject that notion. To embrace something that improves divine prerogatives is to embrace a system that God opposes. His truth reigns in all ages. It will reign for eternity.

Secondly, infallibility means that Scripture is complete and reliable for God's purposes with man. Psalm 19:7 says, "The law of the Lord is perfect [wanting nothing], converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." Scripture is God's prescription

for both heart issues and mind issues. God is working with man for a specified outcome, and He has given Scripture as the chief resource for that end. He was deliberate in what He included. He was deliberate in what He omitted. He precisely designed it that man might be what God designed him to be. It will not fail in its prescriptions, and it will not be supplemented in its purpose. When it offers a proposition, that proposition is not only the right way but the only way for God's purpose in that case to be completely carried out. As soon as psychology, philosophy, politics, religion, entertainment, or imitations begin to supplement divine patterns, it is then that Scripture's reliability as to faith is questioned. If it is reliable, why would we obscure God's pure truth with man's counterfeits?

Thirdly, infallibility means Scripture is unwavering in the scope of its purpose. If it cannot be broken and cannot fail, its mission must inevitably be accomplished. The Lord emphasized this in Isaiah 55. "So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." He also says in Isaiah 44 that He "confirms the word of his servant, and performs the counsel of his messengers." Do we view the teaching and obeying of God's Word with this kind of burden?

Fourth, infallibility means that Scripture defines what reality is, and it cannot be annulled. Notice how the Lord approached unbelief in John 12. He says, "Therefore, they could not believe because Isaiah said. . ." In other words, that fulfillment of prophecy was not incidental; it was a direct result of God's authority over all realities. In the case of the unbelievers, Isaiah's prophecy was binding. It was real. It was true.

Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. The LORD brings the counsel of the heathen to nothing: he makes the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the LORD stands for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations. (Psalm 33:8-11).

This idea is further proven in Luke 16, where the Lord says, "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass than for one tittle of the law to fail." The smallest detail of God's speech is surer than the entirety of heaven and earth. Of its own accord, creation cannot vanish. Only by divine power could the heavens and earth pass away (and they will), but even God has bound Himself by His Word.

May we learn to bow to God's authority in the grand Book with which He has entrusted to us. It is not simply a profitable guide for our faith. It is what we look to as a definition of our very existence. God's Word will not be altered. It will not be successfully challenged. It will not be disproven. It will not fail. It is God's infallible, error-free revelation of Himself. This is the foundation of our faith. This is what divides the true Christianity and the false Christianity. True Christianity lets God be Who He is and lets His Word be what He designed it to be. May we learn to stand for it.