

The Authority of Scripture
Theological distinctive number one!
2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

1. Preamble

- a. This morning I'm launching a seven-part sermon series on GCF's theological distinctives.
 - i. Our mission statement explains GCF's practices
 - ii. Our theological distinctives explain GCF's beliefs
- b. Why do we call them theological distinctives? These are the doctrines that make GCF distinct. Not better... just distinct.
- c. Every church has theological distinctives, we want to lay ours on the table.

2. Prayer...

3. Introduction

- a. On October 31st, 1517, an Augustinian monk, named Martin Luther, nailed a sheet of paper to the door of the massive Castle church in Wittenberg Germany.
- b. This simple act was a formal invitation to discuss his theological concerns with local scholars.
- c. Little did he know that this simple act would start a revolution that would forever alter the course of Western civilization.
- d. This revolution (known as the Protestant Reformation) affected nearly every segment of society—**politics, the arts, economics, education, music, theology, marriage, family, church, state, and a thousand other things.**
- e. But most importantly this revolution transformed the lives of millions of people, giving them hope, purpose, and the assurance of salvation.
- f. What was behind such monumental change? In other words, what drove this revolution? Said another way, what was the main issue?
- g. The main issue was the authority of Scripture!!!

- h. This was the most important theological issue of the sixteenth century, and many argue that it is the most important theological issue of today.
- i. I want to make one simple point this morning—**The Scriptures must be the Christian’s ultimate authority!!!**
- j. To help us understand this, we will look at four things...
 - i. *The nature of Scripture*
 - ii. *The authority of Scripture*
 - iii. *The sufficiency of Scripture*
 - iv. *The content of Scripture*

1. The nature of Scripture

a. What is Scripture? Scripture is God’s very word!

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,**

b. Exposition

- i. Let’s look at the first few words of verse 16 one word/phrase at a time.
- ii. All Scripture is breathed out by God
 - 1. The word “all” means all.
 - 2. This means that every word of the Bible is breathed out by God.
 - 3. Not just the words of Christ in red.
 - 4. Not just the gospels... Or Paul’s letters.
 - 5. Theologians call this verbal/plenary inspiration.
- iii. All Scripture is breathed out by God
 - 1. The Greek word for Scriptures (graphe) was a technical term used 51 times in the NT to refer to the OT.
 - 2. But there are places in the NT that refer to the writings of the NT as Scripture along with the writings of the OT.

a. **2Pe 3:15-16** “*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, 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.**”*

b. **1 Tim 5:18** “*For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages."*

3. Paul writes, “the Scripture says” and then he quotes from Deut. in the OT and the gospel of Luke in the NT. In other words, Paul is claiming that the gospel of Luke (from the NT) is considered Scripture just like the book of Deut. (from the OT)
4. The point- during the first century, people already recognized the writings of the NT as “scripture” equal in authority with the OT Scriptures

iv. All Scripture is breathed out by God

1. The phrase “breathed out by God” is one word in the Greek. It is the word “theopneustos.”
2. From this word, theologians developed the doctrine of organic inspiration...
 - a. The doctrine of organic inspiration teaches that God, in his providence, oversaw the writing of Scripture by using the personalities, life experiences, and training of the authors to get them to write the exact words and phrases he wanted them to write.
3. This means that Scripture comes from God through men.
4. He breathed out, what the authors of Scripture wrote down.
5. The words of 2 Tim. 3:16 are a direct claim to the Bible’s divine authorship.

- v. Summary—All Scripture is breathed out by God. In other words, every word of the Bible comes from God.

- vi. Not only does the Bible teach that all Scripture comes from God, the Bible also teaches us three times that God cannot lie (Nu. 23:19, Psalm 12:6, Tit. 1:2). Since, Scripture is God breathed, and since God can not lie, Scripture cannot lie.
- vii. This means that Scripture is without error.

c. Objections

i. Your argument is guilty of circular Reasoning...

1. To say that the Bible is the Word of God, because the Bible says it is the Word of God is circular reasoning...
2. But, all appeals to ultimate authority are guilty of circular reasoning.
3. Human reason is the highest authority. Why? It is reasonable....
4. Science is the highest authority. Why? It seems scientific
5. Philosophy is the highest authority. Why? Philosophy says so.
6. Logic....
7. It is impossible to avoid circular reasoning when appealing to ultimate authority....
8. God (and his Word) must be the highest authority.
9. Plus, there is massive amounts of corroborating evidence that the Bible is the word of God.
 - a. Historical accuracy
 - b. Archaeology
 - c. Lifechanging power
 - d. Fulfilled prophecy (hundreds of them)
 - i. Two sections...
 - ii. First section is the OT- here is what will happen
 - iii. Second section is the NT- it happened

ii. The Bible is full of errors...

1. Whenever I hear this objection, I ask, "Can you show me those errors?" The skeptic usually can't...
2. With that said, there are some passages that are hard to reconcile at first, but with a little understanding of context, culture, and the original languages, every Bible discrepancy can be harmonized.
3. Here is just one of many examples...

- a. People used to think that Moses could not have written the first five books of the Bible because people could not write back then, but now we know of at least six different written languages from that time period. (Boice, 70)
4. The Bible has been pummeled for 2000 years and it remains standing. In fact, the more we learn about archaeology, science, and the biblical languages the more it is reasonable to affirm the truthfulness of the Bible.
5. This was Jesus' view of Scripture... do you share Jesus' view of Scripture? Or do you have a different view of Scripture than Jesus, the son of God who rose from the grave???
6. Furthermore, when we stand over the Scriptures, trying to determine where the errors are, who is the final authority? We are!!!
7. At this point, I would love to go into a full orb ed defense of the truthfulness of Scripture, but that would turn a 40-minute sermon into a four-hour sermon.
8. If you have questions about the Bible's truthfulness, I would love to meet with you for coffee and talk. Grab me afterwards and we can set up a time.
9. If Scripture is God breathed this has massive implications. This leads us to the next point...

d. First, the nature of Scripture.

2. The authority of Scripture

a. **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,**

b. **Exposition-**

i. **All Scripture (every part and every word) is breathed out by God.**

1. This means that what Scripture says God says.
2. When we read the Bible, we are reading God's very words.

3. When we disobey the Bible, we are disobeying God's very words.
4. When the Bible speaks about a subject God is speaking about a subject.
5. This means that the Bible is the supreme authority on every topic it addresses.
6. This means that a Christian does not have the option of ignoring or disobeying the Bible.
 - a. Sadly, I know of someone who read the Bible often, but skipped over the parts about the roles of husband and wife in marriage.

7. When the Bible speaks, God speaks therefore the Bible is authoritative.

ii. Is the Bible the final authority in your life?

c. Illustration

- i. During the sixteenth century the rallying cry of the Reformers was *Sola Scriptura*—which meant that Scripture alone was their final authority.
- ii. For many “Christians”, feelings are the final authority!!!
- iii. Babylon bee (sola feelings)
 1. “Progressive Evangelicals meet to affirm the Doctrine of Sola Feels”
 2. “PORTLAND, OR—An influential group of the nation's top progressive evangelical authors, speakers, and bloggers met Wednesday evening to officially affirm their recently drafted doctrine of “Sola Feels,” sources confirmed. The new doctrine, translated “By Feels Alone,” formally outlines one of the essentials of modern-day progressive evangelicalism—that one's feelings are the supreme authority in all matters of theology and practice.”
 3. “Quite simply, ‘Sola Feels’ means that all spiritual truths only become true once they're filtered through and accepted by our feels—all the feels,” popular author and speaker Jane Hansen told reporters after the

meeting. “Thus, things that make us feel bad, those are wrong. The things that give us all the happy feels, those are true, right, and good.”

4. “At least, that’s how we feel at the moment, I feel,” she noted.
5. This article is a spoof, but it is not too far from the truth, is it?

iv. Sheliaism-

1. “In his best-selling *Habits of the heart*, Robert Bellah and fellow sociologists surveyed religion in the United States. They concluded that it is best describes as “Sheliaism,” named after one person they interviewed who said that she follows her own little voice. Every American is the founder of his or her own religion, following the dictates of his or her own heart.” (Horton, 30)
- v. The Bible not our feelings, preferences, or the dictates of the current culture are the final authority for Christians!!!
- vi. The Bible must correct our thinking and behavior from time to time. If not, we are merely worshipping an image of ourselves.

d. Applying the authority of Scripture!

- i. Here is the bottom line! The Bible teaches some very unpopular things. If we are not totally committed to the authority of Scripture, we will compromise. The cultural pressure is too strong and gets stronger every day.
- ii. What are some of those unpopular teachings?
 1. The Bible clearly teaches that there are two genders, and only two genders—male and female.
 2. The Bible teaches that your gender corresponds to your plumbing.
 3. The Bible clearly teaches that all sexual activity outside the context of marriage, between one man and one woman, is sinful.
 4. The Bible teaches that homosexuality is wrong (five texts), not once does the Bible approve homosexuality.
 5. The Bible clearly teaches that there is only one way to God, and it is through conscious faith in Jesus Christ.

6. The Bible clearly teaches that heaven and hell are real places and everyone who dies unreconciled to Christ goes to hell.
7. The Bible clearly teaches that husbands are supposed to lead and wives are supposed to follow.
8. The Bible clearly teaches that men are supposed to lead in the church.
9. The Bible clearly teaches that Adam and Eve were God's special creation and did not evolve from the Apes.
10. The Bible clearly teaches that parents are supposed to lovingly discipline their children.
11. Etc...

- iii. GCF will not compromise on these controversial issues because the Bible clearly addresses them.
- iv. Well ... that is your interpretation! No!!! This is the interpretation of 2000 years of church history, by every denomination, until very recently.
- v. And by the way... When we do things according to God's word it leads to human flourishing.
- vi. We must settle the issue of authority. If the Bible is the Word of God, it must be submitted to, no matter how we feel about it and no matter how unpopular it makes us.
- vii. It is all the word of God or none of it is the word of God, we can't pick and choose!!!
- viii. I hope it is clear, why we begin this series with this distinctive.
 1. This is the most important distinctive...
 2. I'm going to say some things later on in this series that may offend you. But I will say these things, because the Bible says these things.
- ii. When the persecution comes...
 1. You must be convinced of the authority of Scripture.
 2. Persecution is coming... you must be convinced.
 3. When you go to jail for being a Christian, you will need to be convinced that the Bible is the word of God...
- iii. A robust commitment to the authority of Scripture is absolutely essential for us to maintain our theology and values over the next 50 years.

e. *Many evangelicals believe the Bible is God breathed and authoritative, but this is not enough. This brings us to our third point...*

i. *The nature of Scripture*

ii. *The authority of Scripture*

3. The sufficiency of Scripture

a. **What is Scripture sufficient for? Scripture is sufficient to equip us for every good work.**

i. **2 Timothy 3:16–17 (ESV) — 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.**

b. Exposition-

i. Because the Bible is God breathed is has power or to equip us for every good work. Listen to what the text says...

1. Since the Bible is God breathed it...

2. is profitable for teaching us (16)

3. is profitable for reproof and correcting us (16)

4. is profitable for training us in righteousness (16)

5. Why does the Bible do all these things?

6. So that we will be complete, lacking nothing, equipped for every good work. (17)

ii. Follow the logic of the passage.

1. Scripture is breathed out by God.

2. Since Scripture is breathed out by God... it has the power to equip us for every good work.

3. Since, it equips us for *every* good work it is all we need.

4. Scripture alone is totally sufficient for this task, since Scripture alone is God breathed.

iii. **Summarizing this text, one scholar writes,**

1. **“The sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament are sufficient to equip the people of god ‘for every good work’. Not just some good works. Not just most good works. No, the Bible equips us for every situation. The Bible is complete, unique, and sufficient.”** (Johnson, 37)

c. Application-

- i. The modern evangelical has a sufficiency problem... most of us believe that the Bible is authoritative but functionally not sufficient.
- ii. This is called Bible plus... what we really need is the Bible plus something else!

1. The Bible is helpful for evangelism but what we really need is the latest marketing techniques and sociological data.
2. The Bible is helpful for reaching non-Christians but what we really need is a thumping band, young attractive people on the stage, a dark room, maybe a smoke machine, and a pastor with tattoos, skinny jeans, and a cool haircut.
3. The Bible is helpful for counseling, but when things get really sticky what we really need is a trained psychiatrist. I'm not diminishing the work of godly psychiatrists/psychologists but if the problem is rooted in sin, the Bible is sufficient.
4. This Bible is helpful for growth in godliness but if we really want to kick an addiction what we really need is the latest 12 step program.
5. The Bible is helpful for bringing about societal change but what we really need are the right political leaders.
6. The Bible is great, but what really excites me is the latest Kevin Deyoung, John Piper, or Dane Ortlund book...

iii. Let's go back to our passage-

1. 2 Timothy 3:16–17 (ESV) — 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.

iv. Let me ask you some questions-

1. When your marriage is struggling, do you pick up the latest marriage book or read Genesis 1-2, Song of Songs, or Ephesians 5?

2. When your finances are a mess do you reach for Dave Ramey's latest book or read the book of Proverbs?
 3. When you are anxious, depressed or lonely, do you reach first for the latest Christian bestseller, or the letters of Paul?
- d. The Bible is sufficient to equip us for every good work. But what happens when I fail to produce good works? This brings us to the last point.
 - e. *First, the nature of Scripture*
 - f. *Second, the authority of Scripture*
 - g. *Third, the sufficiency of Scripture*

4. The content of Scripture

- a. **What is the content of Scripture? Jesus Christ.**
- b. **2 Timothy 3:14–16 (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,
- c. Paul is writing to Timothy his young disciple. He reminds Timothy that he learned of salvation through Jesus Christ as his grandmother read him the OT Scriptures.
- d. The Scriptures contain the incredibly good news that we can be saved from the wrath of god, the power of sin, and the power of the devil.
- e. Salvation comes to us because Jesus died in our place, absorbing the wrath we deserve, breaking the power of sin, and defeating the devil.
- f. You can experience Salvation this morning by admitting that you are a sinner and putting all your hope in Jesus.
- g. This is the central message of Scripture.
 - i. Scripture is not a self-help book! Although it is helpful.
 - ii. Scripture is not God's instruction book! It though it contains instructions.
 - iii. Scripture is not primarily a book of good advice! Although it contains good advice.
 - iv. Scripture is primarily a book of good news!
 - v. It is the good news about Jesus Christ.
 - vi. Do you know this good news!!!

vii. Have you personally appropriated this good news?

h. Is this how you view the Scriptures?

5. Conclusion:

- a. Celebrated Jewish author Chaim Potok wrote a novel titled *In the Beginning*. The main character, a young Jewish boy growing up in Brooklyn, recalls a life-changing event: . . . the night in the second week of October when we danced with the Torah scrolls in our little synagogue The little synagogue was crowded and tumultuous with joy. I remember the white-bearded Torah reader dancing with one of the heavy scrolls as if he had miraculously shed his years. My father and uncle danced for what seemed to me to be an interminable length of time, circling about one another with their Torah scrolls, advancing upon one another, backing off, singing. Saul and Alex and I danced too. It grew warm inside the small room and I went through the crowd and out the rear door to the back porch. I stood in the darkness and let the air cool my face. I could feel the floor of the porch vibrating to the dancing inside the synagogue . . . the joy of dancing with the Torah, holding it close to you, the words of God to Moses at Sinai. (Clark, *The Problem of God*, 66-67)
- b. This raises the question, do we (gentile Christians) dance with our Bibles?
- c. In other words, do we have the same passion for the Word of God?
- d. We should!!! The Bible contains the very words of God to us. Words of hope, comfort, and rescue. Lets pray...