

How Can I Trust the Bible?

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:14-17

14 “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Introduction:

The Bible has been called “the Divine Library”.

More than 500 years ago Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press.

The very first book in history to roll off the press was the Bible.

The Bible has been the world’s best seller ever since.

In October 1987 a Gutenberg original was purchased for over five million dollars. It was the largest price ever paid for a printed book.

Dan Brown, author of “The Da Vinci Code” says we can’t trust it!

Bernard Ramm, a Bible scholar once said, “A thousand times over, the death knell of the Bible has been sounded, the funeral procession formed, the inscription cut on the tombstone, and the committal read. But somehow the corpse never stays put.”

Because the Bible doesn’t go out of style; doesn’t mean people put it to good use.

U.S. News and World report cited a survey that wanted to know what people believed about the Bible.

Here are the results:

- 80% of Americans believe the Bible is the inspired word of God.
- 48% believe there is no one set of values that is right. 48%.

Ladies and gentlemen, if the Bible is truly the Word of God, then the things that are recorded for mankind is the only set of values that can possibly be right.

Billy Graham was quoted as saying, **“If the Bible is right nothing else matters; if it is wrong nothing matters.”**

I want to go record this morning to say – If the Bible is indeed God’s final authority for all the decisions in church life, family life, interpersonal relationships, and business, then being a Bible-believing person, presupposes the fact that you have to be a Bible-behaving person!

Illustration:

Let me give you a true story of this.

A Missionary to a remote village in Papua New Guinea was translating the Bible into his own dialect for his tribe who was hearing the Gospel for the very first time.

When the first chapters of Genesis were completed the attitude toward women changed dramatically, and overnight.

You see – understand this with me – previously the women were treated as possessions.

They had not realized that the woman had been specifically formed out of the side of the man.

When the Gospel confronted previously wrong thinking, these people immediately grasped the ideas of equality between the sexes, and began adjusting their behavior.

The people heard, believed and obeyed.

They changed; just like that!

Spiritual application:

And that is what the Bible does best – confrontation and change.

It confronts our silly notions, and we change.

We either conform to God’s Word, or we harden our hearts ... but you cannot remain the same once the Holy Spirit and the Bible confronts you.

Even when New Testament scholars cast doubt on the validity of the Bible, is it any wonder that the average person who is seeking their own faith, desiring to know more about Christ and Christianity inevitably asks the question: **“How can I trust the Bible?”**

You see man’s inherent selfishness, caused by sin, drives their need to look at the Bible and see the things that are wrong with it.

One traditional saying puts it this way; **“Men don’t reject the Bible because it contradicts itself, but because it contradicts them.”**

You see – that’s where the rubber meets the road!

You see the problem lies in the fact that the people, who can’t trust the Word of God and rely on it as Divinely authoritative, can’t believe in the Divinity of Jesus, and these are the people if they did believe in the Bible as Divinely inspired, then **they would have to confront their sin and their wrong behavior and there wrong thinking.**

You see - **Trusting the Bible lies first in understanding what the Bible is.**

The Bible tells the story of God's activity.

It tells God's story to mankind.

The Bible tells the story of God's creation, God's redeeming acts, and where you and I fit into God's story.

It is the story of Paradise lost in Genesis, and of Paradise restored in Revelation.

And in between, we find the character of God as God moves in steadfast love to reconcile humanity and the creation to Himself.

The steadfast love of God is revealed through His Son, Jesus Christ, and made real to us through the Holy Spirit.

The truth of the Bible is communicated through the story, and to leave out part of the story is to omit part of the truth, and the search then is garbled and confusing.

Illustration:

A candidate for church membership was asked, "What part of the Bible do you like best?" He said: "I like the New Testament best.

Then he was asked, "What Book in the New Testament is your favorite?" He answered, the Book of the Parables, Sir."

They then asked him to relate one of the parables to the membership committee.

And a bit uncertain, he began...

"Once upon a time a man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves; and the thorns grew up and choked the man. And he went on and met the Queen of Sheba, and she gave that man, Sir, a thousand talents of silver, and a hundred changes of raiment. And he got in his chariot and drove furiously, and as he was driving along under a big tree, his hair got caught in a limb and left him hanging here! And he hung there many days and many nights. The ravens brought him food to eat and water to drink. And one night while he was hanging there asleep, his wife Delilah came along and cut off his hair, and he fell on stony ground. And it began to rain, and rained forty days and forty nights. And he hid himself in a cave. Later he went on and met a man who said, "Come in and take supper with me." But he said, "I can't come in, for I have married a wife." And the man went out into the highways and hedges and compelled him to come in! He then came to Jerusalem, and saw Queen Jezebel sitting high and lifted up in a window of the wall. When she saw him she laughed, and he said, "Throw her down out of

there," and they threw her down. And he said "Throw her down again," and they threw her down seventy-times-seven. And the fragments which they picked up filled twelve baskets full! NOW, whose wife will she be in the day of the Judgment?" The membership committee agreed that this was indeed a knowledgeable candidate!

Do you remember in my last sermon when I mentioned to you the fact that sadly many professing believers in the church today are biblically illiterate?

That's why I continually challenge you as a believer to get involved in more than the Sunday morning worship service.

I would like to challenge every believer in this church family to be involved in a Small Bible study group.

So our trust in the Bible is confused if we fail to see that the Bible is God's story, not ours.

I. The Conspiracy of Dan Brown

There have been many men like him down through the centuries who have tried to do the same thing. Let me share with you some direct quotes from him:

"The Bible is a product of man ... not of God."

"More than 80 gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only a few were chosen for inclusion ... Matthew, Mark, Luke and John."

"Who chose which gospels to include? Aha ... the fundamental irony of Christianity! The Bible, as we know it today, was collated by the Roman emperor Constantine the Great. In 325 A.D., he decided to unify Rome under a single religion: Christianity."

But according to Church historians: Here are the errors:

- There were not 80 gospels considered at the Council of Nicea.
- There were only 5 Gnostic (fake) gospels under fake names written somewhere between 120 years to 300 years after Jesus' ministry.

II. The Reality of the Process

It was not Constantine that established the 4 Gospels we have in our Bible.

This was already established before the Council of Nicea.

Rick Howe says, "We possess all of the rulings of the council, along with the written reports of some of the bishops who attended, and the issue of which books should be in the New Testament never arose. It was never discussed at all." (Because the 4

Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and many others were already established as being inspired and included in the New Testament.)

It has been proven that the 4 Gospels of the New Testament that we have now were established within the first and second century after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

We trust the Bible as the inspired Word of God, not only because God says so, but because history proves it to be so.

Not only do we trust the Bible because it is God's story, but

A. The words of the Bible itself give us confidence in its contents.

Our text today indicates that *“all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

B. It is trustworthy because it comes from God to give us direction for our lives as God reveals where we fit into His story.

Explaining the Canon of the Old Testament.

I'm not going to go into great detail on this because it is so simple.

But even in Jesus' day there was a very clear defined canon of the Old Testament.

It was quoted not only by Jesus, but by all the New Testament writers who were contemporary with Jesus.

The Septuagint – that is the Greek translation of the Old Testament – was put together about 250 years before Christ.

Jesus himself quoted the Old Testament when He was tempted by Satan in the wilderness.

Jesus often used the O. T. Scriptures to refute the Pharisees and other opponents of His ministry.

It was the O.T. Scriptures which strengthened Jesus when He was on the cross as he cried out to God the Father, *“My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?”*

And Jesus referred His disciples to the Scriptures that must be fulfilled concerning His death and resurrection.

Explaining the Canon of the New Testament

The establishing of the New Testament canon books were accomplished very much like the O.T.

The earliest document actually lists 27 books of the N.T.

Historical Evidence for the Bible's reliability:

- **Scriptural authority was already given to Paul's letters in 67 A.D. I Peter 3:16**
- **References to the New Testament writings were prefaced with "it is written" by 100 A.D.**
- **The 4 Gospels were clearly set and referred to as a unit by 150 A.D.**
- **A Historical Father by the name of Justin Martyr refers to the 4 Gospels as ... "the memoirs of the apostles."**
- **The canon was clearly established and Closed by 200 A.D.**
- **Irenaeus spoke of ... "The fourfold gospel"**
- **Tertullian referred to the Old and New Testaments as "Divine Scriptures"**

There is so much information on this whole subject that it would take us several days and many hours to cover it all.

One of John Wesley's principles for understanding God was the authority of Scripture; but experience was held high in determining his faith.

The idea here for every one of us is that you jump into the Scriptures and they will speak for themselves, and the Scriptures will do all the convincing you need.

Practical Application:

- Jesus has always been imitated by imposters.
- Jesus has always been rejected by humanity.
- Isaiah spoke of God's prediction of that fact hundreds of years before Jesus was ever born.

Isaiah 53:3 *"He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account."*

Matthew 23:37 *"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!"*

I hear some people are saying they can't trust the Bible because the Bible says so.

Our generation may be skeptical.

But so were earlier generations. They always have been! This is not a new thing that we should become alarmed by a new attack on the Bible.

Let me give you just four very brilliant minds that were skeptics and started off to study the Scriptures and history with express purpose of disproving the Gospels and the Bible: Each one of them wound – up becoming believers, and eventually leaders in Christian thinking.

- 1) A contemporary of our day, **Lee Strobel** was a Yale law school graduate and an award winning editor of the Chicago Tribune. He was an atheist and a God-hater. He set out to prove the Bible wrong. He now hosts “Faith under Fire” – a TV program to show people how the Bible can be trusted.
- 2) **C. S. Lewis** was a humanist – disillusioned by the death of his mother and the cold-heartedness of his father, as well as the horrors of the I World War. He became a college professor and attempted to disprove the existence of God. He became the 20th century leading defender of the Faith.
- 3) **St. Augustine** was the original prodigal son, breaking his Christian mother’s heart. He didn’t know his Mom was still praying for him. He set out to waste his life on partying. While thumbing his nose at God, the truth showed up, and it set him on fire.
- 4) Our biggest example would be the Pharisee, **Saul**. Religious and wrong; Saul set out to not only disprove Christianity – he had designs on destroying anyone who got in his way. On his

way to kill Christians at Damascus, Saul met Jesus ... then he went blind. Then God gave him a new name, and **the Apostle Paul** wrote 13 books of the New Testament for the love of Jesus Christ.

III. Seven reasons why I need to believe the Bible and study the Word of God:

1. I need truth. Romans 3:4

“By no means! Although everyone is a liar, let God be proved true ...”

I am trying harder than ever before to become a student of the Word of God.

The Truth of Jesus Christ sets me free from condemnation.

2. I need strong faith. Romans 10:17

“So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the Word of Christ.”

Notice with the promise and the precept.

Faith is available **for the trial of life ...**

“Faith comes” - that is the promise.

The precept is the fact that “Faith comes on God’s terms not on ours.

3. Thirdly, I need wisdom

15

“If any of you is lacking wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given to you.” James 1:5

To go along with my faith, I need wisdom to apply strength.

Folks, we live in a fallen world.

To survive in this world we need help.

A Sign was noticed in a school principal’s office that read like this:

IN CASE OF A NUCLEAR WAR, FIRE, OR
EARTHQUAKE, THE BAN OF PRAYER
WILL BE TEMPORARILY LIFTED.

You see – listen to me – Real wisdom is that which teaches us to depend on a Higher Being – God, the Father.

4. Fourth – I need to see Beauty.

“...to provide for those who mourn in Zion – to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display His glory.” Isaiah 61:3

We love pictures don’t we?

16

Isaiah saw the Lord Jesus as receiving the ashes of our lives, and returning the beauty of new life ... Folks, that’s salvation.

The Resurrected Lord takes the heaviness of sorrow and turns it into praise we wear like a beautiful suit of clothes.

5. Fifth – I need Encouragement.

“David was in great danger; for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in spirit for their sons and daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.” I Samuel 30:6

Sometimes the only encouragement I can get comes from the Word of God.

I have been in low places.

I have been so discouraged at times that I have wanted to give up and quit.

When I turned to God and His Word I found encouragement every time.

God has never forgotten me.

The Word of God tells me that God is rooting for me, no matter what others feel about me.

God thinks I’m special ... special enough to have His Son die for me on a cross.

The Word of God encourages me. PTL

6. Sixth – I need peace.

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:7

If you listen to the humanists and the new-agers, they will tell you that peace will be found in achieving status, cleaner air, protected species and better education.

Jesus said His peace was not like any other peace in the world.

It’s not a fleeting peace – His peace is like everlasting and no circumstances can bring it down.

I don’t know what this does for you, but I’m blessed today because Jesus has never failed me in giving me His peace.

7. Lastly – I need to obey.

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved my Him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the Word of Truth.” II Timothy 2:15

I have a confidence this morning that if I obey God – come what may – as long as I obey Him – He will take care of me.

Conclusion:

The Word of God is my truth.

It’s my faith.

It’s my wisdom.

It’s my beauty.

It’s by encouragement.

It’s my peace.

It’s my guide for every choice I make.

I have discovered that obedience brings the laughter of the redeemed.

Listen to me – We are the Redeemed of God.

We can be happy about that.

We can rejoice about that.

How many times have we prayed over some one who needed prayer?

The doctors told them something was wrong with some area of their body.

We prayed. They went back to the doctor and the doctor was confused and said, “We saw something, but it’s not there now!”

Doesn't that make you want to rejoice?

It wasn't a mistake.

It wasn't a coincidence!

And let me say, many doctors have come to the conclusion when they know prayers have been lifted for someone, they give credit to God Almighty. Amen.

A man once said, I cannot believe in this Jesus and all the church says about Him until I see Him.

The response of the minister to him was, "Then you'll never see Him until you believe in Him."

So let's look at the external evidence that proves the trustworthiness of the Bible.

- Bible means book.
- When we say "The Bible" we are saying the book.
- But it is not just a book, but a book of books; sixty-six books altogether.
- The Bible is a book compiled over a period of approximately 1,500 years, over 40 different generations.
- Over 40 authors wrote it from all walks of life on three different continents, in different moods, and in three different languages.

- Think of a servant, a king, a military general, a doctor, a fisherman, a tentmaker, a poet, a farmer, and a tax collector all writing from places such as a prison, a dungeon, a pastoral hillside, a palace, and a ship during times of war and times of peace.
- Yet they all tell the same story--the story of God's activity in redeeming humanity.
- Factor in the evidence that there are over 5,300 pieces of preserved text from the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, and over 10,000 from the Latin Vulgate, and at least 9,300 other early versions of the Bible, and we have more external evidence for the trustworthiness of the Bible than any ancient writings.
- More than Homer, more than Aristotle or Plato, more than William Shakespeare himself.
- Yet we do not question the validity of their writings.

Ultimately, though, we will not trust in the Bible through documentary evidence preserved through history, and debated by historians, theologians, and philosophers.

But we will trust the Bible because we accept it as God's story, and how do we accept it?

- **By faith.** Ultimately, it comes down to a question of faith, and God gives us the faith to trust His word for the salvation of our souls.
- Our faith is confirmed by the experiences of our lives, and the experiences of our lives confirm the truthfulness and validity of the Scriptures.
- The impact the Word has had on countless saints through the ages stands as a testimony to its truthfulness and dependability in leading and directing each person on our journey of faith.

Anatoli Shcharansky, a dissident Soviet Jew, kissed his wife goodbye as she left Russia for freedom in Israel. His parting words to her were, "I'll see you soon in Jerusalem."

But Anatoli was detained and finally imprisoned.

Their reunion in Jerusalem would not only be postponed, it might never occur.

During long years in Russian prisons and work camps Anatoli was stripped of his personal belongings.

His only possession was a miniature copy of the Psalms.

Once during his imprisonment, his refusal to release the book to the authorities cost him 130 days in solitary confinement.

Finally, twelve years after parting with his wife, he was offered freedom.

In February 1986, as the world watched, Shcharansky was allowed to walk away from Russian guards toward those who would take him to Jerusalem. But in the final moments of captivity, the guards tried again to confiscate the Psalms book. Anatoli threw himself face down in the snow and refused to walk on to freedom without it. Those words had kept him alive during imprisonment. He would not go on to freedom without them.

Folks, that's the kind of love we all need in the Word of God, which we call the Bible.

I can trust the Bible!

Incredibly, the original message has been passed down with amazing integrity so that we today hold in our hands the same message that was inspired almost 2,000 years ago.

The Bible was written on three continents. It was written in three languages. It covers 1,000's of years of history and was written over a span of more than 1,700 years by people from all walks of life – from Kings to

poor fishermen; yet it has one central theme that flows together. It does not contradict itself. It is the only book of its kind in the history of civilization.

It's message is a simple one:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16