

THE HOLY SCRIPTURE

II Tim. 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

We are beginning a series that is of great importance to our fellowship. The series is based entirely upon the Word of God. God's Word is the most thrilling piece of literature that this world has ever been blessed with. It contains such things as history, poetry, laws, various teachings for many situations ... and it is in the light of the Word of God that God's people must live before Him.

One of the dangers throughout history was articulated by Paul when he was writing to Timothy, II Tim. 4:1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; 2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. 5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. He gave Timothy the responsibility to preach the Word in accordance with sound doctrine. This passage of Scripture was preached at my ordination almost seventeen years ago. I have come across self-appointed theologians and self-appointed arbiters in theological matters, - people who have no soundness in being able to truly and earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.

There has always been and there are today so many of these teachers with 'itching ears' who are causing havoc in denominations and in local fellowships. Their ignorance causes them to use the Word of God incorrectly; ... so, *how* do you stand up against them and refute their false teachings?

You can go away back to the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) in 49AD; or to the Council of Nicea (325AD), or to Chalcedon (451AD) or to a whole host of Councils where the theologians of the day had to contend with error.

But rather than branch out into a history lesson, - and by the way, if many Christians would know more about Church History they would be more prepared to meet the errors of today, - instead I want to introduce you to the Confession of Faith (1689) that is the Confession the Particular Baptist movement was based upon.

(As you will know, other ‘Confessions of Faith’ are the Thirty-Nine Articles of Anglicanism and the Westminster Confession of Faith of the Presbyterians. If you don’t have a basis of faith, people just simply believe anything they want to believe!)

Baptists, sadly, can be a motley crew but this document sets out what we are supposed to believe. It is thoroughly and soundly Biblical, and it differs only in two major areas with the Presbyterians ... and that is in the area of Baptism and Church Membership.

I have total confidence in this document as being faithful to Scripture, - if you want to know what I believe you can find it here. ... I had an email from Bill Turnbull and he was telling me he is also starting a series in Larbert on this very same subject. I know too of other fellowships who have recently seen the need to return to consider the basis of our faith. When you are surrounded by error, the only way to confront it is with truth ... and this is God’s Truth!

We won’t be going through it laboriously (I hope!☺) but I am concerned that God’s people *know* the fundamentals of our faith.

The opening chapter is on the subject of **The Holy Scripture**. Since that is the basis of all we believe, that is a fitting place to start! The Confession says, “*The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience.*”

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE WORD OF GOD

* I have over 800 books in my study, and easy access to hundreds more. I have books that would be ‘collector’s items’ and some books that are keepsakes. I have some original editions, and books and sermons by the greatest of preachers.

- * I also have over thirty translations and versions of the Bible; I have different versions of the New Testament in the Greek language and the Old Testament in Hebrew and in the Greek. I also have the Bible in Latin, German, French and Italian.
- * Out of all the books, - precious to me as many of them are, - there is one book that stands above them all. ... There is no book that compares with God's Word.
- * He is its Editor, its 'Proof reader', its Author, its Analyst ... He is at the very centre of His Word.
- * This Word is not about man and his God, this Book is about God and His dealings with men. Humanity is not the focal point ... God is the focal point.
- * You don't read this Book to see what men did ... you read this Book to see what God did!
- * He's not simply a 'Hero' of the Book; He's the *God* of the Book!
- * You read it not to learn about the prophets and the apostles ... you read to learn about the God of the prophets and the apostles!
- * It is unique in its Authorship, [no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, wrote Peter \(II Pet. 1:20,21\).](#)
- * God directed the minds and the pens of those who wrote the Book. He guided their thoughts; He told them where to put the commas and full stops; He told them where to begin and where to end; He told them to write down things they couldn't understand (e.g. [Dan.12:8 And I heard, but I understood not](#)). God guided the thoughts of these men to whom He gave the burden of recording His Word.
- * It is unique in its character. It makes claims about itself that no other book makes. Here are just a few examples:
 - * [Ps. 119:89 O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. ... 140 Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it. ... 160 Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.](#)
 - * [Jn. 17: 17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.](#)

- * It contains absolutely no error or mistakes. You hear people try to find ‘contradictions’ but when you question them you soon discover they have an ignorance any fool would be proud of!
- * God’s Word is pure, perfect and complete. It tells you how the world began, - not as a consequence of a catastrophic molecular and atomic crash in outer space, - but as the gentle controlled and orderly creation in the hands of the Sovereign God.
 - * If only the scientists would listen to Isaac Newton who said, “No sciences are better attested than the religion of the Bible”.
 - * ... Or even to Charles Darwin who, - in later life, - it is reputed by a Christian, Lady Elizabeth Hope, that he turned to Christ on his deathbed in repentance.
- * This same Bible tells you how sin entered this world and the effect it had as it divided up people against people, and nation against nation. It tells you about the development of hatred, murder and killing; it tells you about adultery and divorce; it tells you about government corruption; it tells you about the mismanagement of financial institutions. It tells you all about the sins of the world, - their beginnings, impact and their end ...
- * For it tells you about the coming of the Son of God in order to redeem unto Himself those whom He had purposed to save. It tells you about the sacrifice of Christ for sinners, and the resurrection from the grave, and His rising up into Heaven. It tells you about one day when He will return again.
- * This Book is like none other because it is infallible and it is inerrant, - there is not even a slight whiff of inaccuracies; there is nothing unreliable or false about its claims. All that it says is true ... because, - simply, - it *is* the Word of God!
- * It is wholly and absolutely inspired of God. His thumbprint and His seal of approval are in every page.
- * All that God wants to be there is there ... and all that He left out He left out for His own purposes, [Jn. 20:30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.](#)
the uniqueness of the Book ...

THE COMPLETENESS OF THE BOOK

- * It has 66 books, - 39 in the Old Testament, 27 in the New.
- * It is complete and finished and it is perfect. “No, it’s not!” the devil and his friends say.
- * He lines up alongside the 66 books what is known as the Apocrypha and the Deutero-canonical books (e.g. Esdras, Sirach, Maccabees, etc.). These are equal to the 66, - no, they’re not! They might be useful for history or other types of historical reading material but they are not *the* Word of God.
- * Neither can you set the Book of Mormon alongside the Word of God, nor the writings of Mary Baker Eddy of the Christian Scientists, nor the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ New World Translation.
- * God’s Word is unique and it is complete. It has a warning, [Rev. 22:18](#) *If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 19 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 book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*
- * If you have a Bible that leaves verses of God’s Word out (like all the versions based upon Westcott and Hort) it’s a serious indictment, - I believe, - and perhaps one of the many reasons God isn’t blessing the modern Church. (If the soldier’s weapon is tinkered with, it is no good for the battle!)
 - * If the true text of His Word is being tampered with, not a bit of wonder God’s people are all over the place when it comes to not knowing what they are supposed to believe!
 - * Once upon a time the devil used to burn and persecute the Christians to stop the spread of God’s Word; but he eventually cottoned on to the idea of emaciating the Word of God and bringing it down to the language and the level of the other ordinary books in the bookshops.
 - * Give a man a Ph.D. or a professorship and he thinks he can tamper with God’s Word. The devil has done more harm that way because he has got many Christians falling into the trap of treating God’s Word like any other book.
- * But God’s Word is altogether different, - it is indeed complete, it is perfect.

- * The modern-day prophets are only wolves in sheep's clothing; God's Word doesn't need to be added to the way they add to it. You watch and you listen to the Benny Hinn's and the Kenneth Copeland's and all their disciples and you'll see the viciousness of the wolves' teeth underneath the sheep's wool!
- * Martin Luther sometimes got it wrong, so did Calvin, so did Spurgeon, so did every theologian no matter how hard they tried to be meticulously careful.
- * God's Word *alone* is perfect and complete. It *alone* 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 perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.
- * **The uniqueness of the Word of God, the completeness ...**

THE TESTIMONY OF THE WORD OF GOD

- * *Ch. 1:4 The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the author thereof; ... it is to be received because it is the Word of God.*
- * The question of the Bible's authority is absolutely central to our historical Protestant faith. The Reformation was built upon it.
- * Some three thousand times the Bible makes the claim for itself, "Thus saith the Lord". That is its own testimony. ... "The Bible is the Word of God, but *not because it says so. Rather, it says so because it is the Word of God.*"
- * To doubt God's Word is a serious offence, "Let's leave that verse out" or "Let's change that one" ... It has developed to such a degree that liberal theologians and their offshoots tell you it is naïve to think that all Scripture is inspired.
- * I heard about a Fraternal of so-called evangelical Ministers who were discussing this very subject; they laughed at and rejected a brother who believed as we do in the total and inerrant inspiration of Scripture.
- * I was at a meeting when the first eleven chapters of the Bible were described by a Minister of another denomination as 'myth' and 'fairy story'. (If you can't believe the first verse, - never mind the first eleven chapters, - why bother reading any further!)

- * Only a fool, - even a religious fool, - would contradict the wisdom and testimony of God's Word for God is *jealous* for His Word and will not suffer the rantings of the fools to go unnoticed!
- * When Babylon and Rome and Communism and every other anti-Christian society tried to destroy His Word He protected it.
- * Where is Babylon today? Where is Communism today? Rome is only coming to the fore because God yet has plans to use her in the final assault before the coming of Christ ... otherwise it would be lost in the sands of some remote wilderness.
- * The history surrounding Augustine and the Church Fathers, John Hus, John Wycliffe, the Reformers, the Anabaptists, the Covenanters is that they faced opposition because of the Word.
- * Their legacy was blessed of God because they testified to the Truth of the Word of God.
- * John Brainerd, Robert Moffat, Samuel Marsden, William Carey, Hudson Taylor, David Livingstone took the testimony of God's Word to people who had never heard it ... the reason? They believed in its **uniqueness**, its **completeness** and its **testimony**.

Conclusion. Yes, it's precious. It would be wrong to idolise the Book as simply a Book; but yet we hold it in reverence *because* it is the Word of God.

- * As such it should not occupy a place less than a place of respect ... that we would never put our most prized earthly possession.
- * Would you throw your best clothes on the floor? Would you throw something that is precious to you under a pile of clutter?
- * The Bible should never be lying on the floor, or under books or magazines, or in any place you would not want God to find you being careless with His Book.
- * Away back in Josiah's day they found again the old scrolls of the Word of God ... what a time of rejoicing and revival came about as a consequence of that discovery!
- * Our Confession of faith reminds us that God's Word is exactly that ... *it is His*. He has privileged us with its keeping. With that privilege comes also *responsibility* to Him for His infallible, inerrant and inspired Word.