

# DOCTRINE OF THE BIBLE

## Inerrancy and Infallibility of Scripture

### Lesson #10

---

Two of the cardinal doctrines of Christianity are the infallibility and inerrancy of the Word of God. Yet, one can wonder how these doctrines can be true, given the fact that all recognize that we do not have any of the original manuscripts and that the manuscripts we do have are flawed and contain copyist errors. If the teaching of the Bible has been corrupted or if the Bible is full of errors, this creates catastrophic implications for Christianity. If infallibility and inerrancy are not true, then God has failed to preserve His Word, Christianity is without a foundation, and the Word of God has lost its authority. In this lesson we will explore the doctrines of the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture and seek to unravel some of the more difficult issues that these doctrines present.

## I. DEFINITION OF INERRANCY AND INFALLIBILITY OF SCRIPTURE

- A. Inerrancy is the view that when all the facts become known, they will demonstrate that the Bible, in its original autographs and correctly interpreted, is entirely true and never false in all it affirms, whether that relates to doctrine or ethics or to the social, physical, or life sciences.<sup>1</sup>
- B. Infallibility may be called the subjective consequence of divine inspiration; that is, it defines the Scripture as reliable and trustworthy to those who turn to it in search for God's truth. As a source of truth, the Bible is *indefectable* that is, it cannot fall away or defect from the standard of truth. Consequently, it will never fail or deceive anyone who trusts it.<sup>2</sup>
- C. The terms inerrancy and infallibility seem to us practically interchangeable. There are those who think that the word *infallibility* smacks too much of the idea of papal authority<sup>3</sup>, a treatment of the Bible as a piece of paper that automatically settles every question. The fact is that if Scripture is infallible, it cannot err; and if it is inerrant, this is because it contains no mistakes.<sup>4</sup>
- D. Sometimes it is easier to understand what is meant by inerrancy and infallibility when we describe what is *not* meant by those terms. The terms are *not saying* that those who copied the Scriptures never made mistakes. They are *not saying* that the Greek and Hebrew texts we have today are identical to the original manuscripts. But what the terms do mean is that the Bible is inerrant in that it contains no internal error or contradiction. It is to believe that all of the truth that

---

<sup>1</sup>Walter Elwell, Gen, Ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, pg.142.

<sup>2</sup>Phillip Comfort Gen. Ed., *The Origin of the Bible*, pg. 38.

<sup>3</sup>Roman Catholics describe the Bible as inerrant but the authoritative teachings of the church as infallible. Hence, some try to stay away from the term infallible so as not to include the false notion of papal infallibility.

<sup>4</sup>Rene Pache, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Scripture*, pg. 120.

God intended to communicate through His Word has been perfectly preserved in the Bibles we have without error and that they are infallible, never deviating from what God wanted to communicate.

## II. **THOUGHTS TO PONDER ABOUT INERRANCY AND INFALLIBILITY OF SCRIPTURE**

- A. Christians must come to grips with the fact that we do not have the original autographs, nor do we have the ability to prove the Bible is inerrant and infallible. Because we believe that only the original autographs are inspired, inerrant and infallible we admit that all the copies are not inspired, inerrant, or infallible. Even if all the original autographs were miraculously preserved and found, we still would not be absolutely sure that they were the originals and one would still have to believe in faith that they were the originals and that they were the Word of God. Because of this, inerrancy and infallibility are doctrines which must be received by faith. This does not mean that there isn't sufficient Scriptural and extra-biblical evidence to argue for inerrancy and infallibility, but even then, one must have faith that the Bible is God's Word.

Christians usually use the Bible to argue for the Bible's inerrancy and authority. They presuppose that the Bible is true and then use what the Bible says to argue that it is inerrant and infallible. This admittedly is circular reasoning. Yet, this should not discourage us because **all** belief systems have presuppositions and **all** belief systems use circular reasoning! For instance, the atheist presupposes that God doesn't exist. He presupposes that he is able to determine truth, to be objective and to gather all the evidence and make a logical and rational conclusion based on the evidence. But it cannot be proven that he is logical, or objective, or that he has all the evidence. In fact, the evidence proves otherwise. Hence, the atheist must have faith in his presuppositions before he can argue from those presuppositions. This is to use circular reasoning.

The Scriptures do not use the terms infallibility and inerrancy. These doctrines are defined and supported by theological inference like the doctrine of the Trinity. The word Trinity does not appear in the Bible but there are many texts which state that there is one God who has chosen to reveal Himself in three persons i.e., God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The three are together the one true God. In like manner, the Scriptures teach that the Word of God is true, pure, without error, enduring and a product of a divine miracle. Since anything God does is perfect, the Scriptures, which are the Word of God, must be without error and infallible, since God cannot err or make mistakes.

In conclusion, infallibility and inerrancy argue that the Hebrew and Greek texts of today and the Bible translations derived from them are for all practical purposes inerrant in that they tell us exactly what God wanted us to know, are without error and are completely and totally trustworthy and authoritative in part and whole.

- B. If God is omniscient, he must know all things. He cannot be ignorant of or in error on any matter. Further, if he is omnipotent, he is able to so affect the Biblical author's writing that nothing erroneous enters into the final product. And being a truthful or veracious being, he will certainly desire to utilize these abilities in such a way that man will not be misled by the Scriptures. Thus, our view of inspiration logically entails the inerrancy of the Bible. Inerrancy is a corollary of the doctrine of full inspiration. If then it should be shown that the Bible is not fully truthful, our view of inspiration would also be in jeopardy.<sup>5</sup>
  
- C. The Book of God has no errata in it; it is a beam of the Sun of Righteousness, a crystal stream flowing from the fountain of life. All laws and edicts of men have had their corruption but the Word of God has not the least tincture, it is of meridian splendor. Thy word is very pure (Psa. 119:140), like wine that comes from the grape, which is not mixed nor adulterated. It is so pure that it purifies everything else.<sup>6</sup>

### III. **SCRIPTURAL PROOF OF INERRANCY AND INFALLIBILITY OF SCRIPTURE**

#### A. **Inspiration is clearly taught in the Bible and requires inerrancy and infallibility<sup>7</sup>**

- 1. In II Sam. 23:2 David describes how God communicated through him and says, The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue.
- 2. II Tim. 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;
- 3. II Pet. 1:21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.
  - a. Since the Bible is a product of divine inspiration, what implications does that have for its inerrancy and infallibility?

#### B. **Miracles affirm that the Word of God is inspired and hence inerrant and infallible**

- 1. Deut. 13:1-5 If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, 2and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them, 3you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you to find out if you love the Lord your God with all your heart and

---

<sup>5</sup>Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, pg. 225.

<sup>6</sup>Thomas Watson, *Body of Divinity*, pg. 28.

<sup>7</sup> See Lesson #6 on inspiration for many other Biblical proof texts.

with all your soul. 4 You shall follow the Lord your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him. 5 But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the Lord your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you.

2. Deut. 18:20-22 But the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. 21 You may say in your heart, How will we know the word which the Lord has not spoken? 22 When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

a. If a true prophet is able to predict the future, what does that tell us about the source of his prophetic utterances and what implications does this have for the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible?

### C. **Jesus implied infallibility and inerrancy of the Scriptures<sup>8</sup>**

1. Mt. 5:17-20 Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. 18 For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. 19 Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

2. Jn. 10:34-35 Jesus answered them, Has it not been written in your Law, I said, you are gods? 35 If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken),

a. Jesus taught that the Scriptures were both enduring and unbreakable. What implications does this have on inerrancy and infallibility?

### D. **The Scriptures teach that every word and detail of the Bible is inerrant and infallible**

1. Psa. 119: 42, 96, 140, 142, 151, 160, 172  
42 So I will have an answer for him who reproaches me, For I trust in Your word.  
96 I have seen a limit to all perfection; Your commandment is exceedingly broad.  
140 Your word is very pure, Therefore Your servant loves it.  
142 Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your law is truth.

---

<sup>8</sup> Absolute authority necessitates inerrancy and infallibility since without those qualities the Bible would not be totally and completely authoritative.

151 You are near, O Lord, And all Your commandments are truth.

160 The sum of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.

172 Let my tongue sing of Your word, For all Your commandments are righteousness.

2. Mt. 22:32<sup>9</sup> I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.
3. Mt. 22:43-44<sup>10</sup> He said to them, Then how does David in the Spirit call Him Lord, saying, 44 The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, Until I put Your enemies beneath Your feet?
4. Gal. 3:16<sup>11</sup> Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, And to seeds, as referring to many, but rather to one, And to your seed, that is, Christ.
  - a. What implications do the above verses create if the Bible is not inerrant and infallible?

#### E. **The Scriptures teach that God cannot lie and that the Scriptures are His Word**

1. Num b. 23:19 God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?
2. I Sam. 15:29 Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind.
3. Titus 1:2 in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago,
4. Heb. 6:18 so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.
  - a. If there were errors, mistakes, and untruths in the Bible, what implications would that have on the verses above?

---

<sup>9</sup>Here the entire argument rests on the tense of a verb I AM.

<sup>10</sup>Here Jesus hangs his argument on the possessive phrase my Lord.

<sup>11</sup>Here Paul's argument rests on whether a noun is singular or plural.

**F. The Scriptures teach that God's Word will not pass away**

1. Isa. 40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.
2. Mk. 13:31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.
  - a. What implications do the verses above have on the preservation and accuracy of the Bible?

**IV. ERRORS CONCERNING INERRANCY AND INFALLIBILITY OF SCRIPTURE**

- A. *False* The Bible can be regarded as infallible without being inerrant.
- B. *False* It is okay to believe that the Bible is partially inerrant.
- C. *False* You can believe the Bible is dynamically inerrant i.e., that it contains errors but is still infallible, and still trust it as the soul rule of faith and practice.
- D. *False* We must assume the Bible has errors in it because it is a human work and humans make mistakes.
- E. *False* It is erroneous to say that every thing the Bible reports is true and to be followed. Many errors, false doctrines, and sins are reported in the Bible and are historically accurate. But just because something is recorded or reported, that does not mean we should do it or that it is ethically or morally right. False teaching and wicked deeds are truly recorded but not part of God's prescribed will for believers to follow. They serve as warnings and examples of what not to do (I Cor. 10:1-14).
- F. *False* You can disagree with Jesus' view of the Scriptures and still be His disciple, follow Him, and profess Him as Lord.
- G. *False* Passages that are difficult to understand, problems in the Bible that are hard to understand, and copyist errors prove the Bible is not inerrant or infallible.

**V. APPLICATION OF INERRANCY AND INFALLIBILITY OF SCRIPTURE**

- A. The application of the inerrancy and infallibility of the Scripture, although hard to prove, is simple. God has determined to communicate to man through the Scriptures, His Word and the gospel message so that men might be saved, know Him, know His plan for the future, and give Him glory. Because God is all powerful and perfect, He cannot err. He has chosen to use fallible humans to

miraculously give us His Word through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And he has preserved it through the centuries so that the Bibles we have today are without error and unbreakable in that they communicate all of what God wants us to know perfectly, with no deviation, and the truth communicated is completely reliable and trustworthy and will never be proven wrong. The primary application in all of this is: you can trust and must obey what the Bible teaches is God's will for your life.

- B. Bishop Pole speaking of scriptural infallibility and inerrancy said, Once allow the worm to gnaw the root, and we must not be surprised if the branches, leaves, and the fruit, little by little decay.<sup>12</sup>

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,  
is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!  
What more can He say than to you  
He hath said To you,  
who for refuge to Jesus  
have fled?

---

<sup>12</sup> Bishop Pole, quoted by Harold O. J. Brown, in Philip Wesley Comfort's book, *The Origin of the Bible*, pg. 47.